Creating Literacy Instruction for All Children in Grades Pre-K to 4
The Nature of Literacy and Today’s Children
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. At the end of 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.
   Agree    Disagree

2. Reading should not be fragmented into a series of subskills.
   Agree    Disagree

3. Oral reading should be accurate.
   Agree    Disagree

4. Phonics should be taught only when a need arises.
   Agree    Disagree

5. Reading short passages and answering questions about them provide excellent practice.
   Agree    Disagree

6. Mistakes in oral reading should be ignored unless they change the sense of the passage.
   Agree    Disagree

Using What You Know

This chapter provides a general introduction to literacy instruction in preschool and grades K–4. 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. Think over what you know about the nature of reading. 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 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 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, the 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. (Pinnell, 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 upon 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

- **Scripted program** is one in which the teacher is provided with specific teaching directions, including the wording of directions and instruction.
- **Cognitivism** is a philosophy of learning that describes the activities of an organism in terms of observable actions or behaviors and internal or mental states.
- **Constructionism (constructivism)** is a cognitive philosophy of learning that describes learning as an active process in which the learner constructs mental models of reality.
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 (1962), an adherent of social constructivism, stressed the importance of social factors in cognitive development. 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. 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 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 independent functioning. Instruction and collaboration with an adult or with 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 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 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 processes the child is using provides insight into the child’s level of development.
• Classrooms should be rich in verbal guidance. Interaction with the teacher and peers fosters 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 her- 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).

### Top-Down, Bottom-Up Theories

Another way of looking at theories of literacy learning is whether they are mainly **bottom-up**, **top-down**, or somewhere in between. On one end of the continuum are those who espouse a subskills, or bottom-up, approach, and on the other end 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. 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 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, 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 because 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. Pressley (2006) found that most were interactionists. 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 continuum? Go back to the anticipation guide at the beginning of the chapter. Review how you answered the six statements. If you agreed with only the odd-numbered ones, you are a bottom-up advocate. If you agreed with only the even-numbered ones, you are probably a top-downer. If your answers are mixed, you are probably an interactionist. Still another way of looking at reading is from a literary theory view. Literary theory explores the role of the reader.

FYI Many theorists claim that, when reading, we process virtually every word and virtually every letter in the words, but that context fosters both speed and accuracy of word recognition (Adams, 1990).
The Reader’s Role in the Reading Process

What is the reader’s role in the reading process? In the past, it 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)

Does it make any difference whether reading is viewed as being transmissional, transactional, or somewhere in between? Absolutely. If reading is viewed as transmissional, 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.

Approach Taken by this Text

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 letter to sound to word. In the top-down
The Reader’s Role in the Reading Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<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.</td>
<td>Present and reinforce skills, such as phonics, in systematic fashion. Reinforce appropriate behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitivism</td>
<td>Mental processes are important. Students are active learners as they use strategies to acquire facts, skill, and concepts.</td>
<td>Teach strategies. Ask questions that help reveal students’ thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Portions of the chart are adapted from Woolfolk (2001), Table 9.8, Four Views of Learning (p. 358).

process, the reader proceeds from sampling of language cues to prediction and to confirmation. In an integrated approach, however, 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 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). When information from one processor is weak, another may be called on
to give assistance. For instance, when a word such as *lead* is encountered, 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. Depending on circumstances, however, 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 because the reader uses knowledge of language and knowledge of the world to fill in what is missing. If 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 text: using phonics and context to decipher unknown words, activating one’s knowledge of a topic, predicting meaning, summarizing, and visualizing.

Importance of the Students’ Experiences and Cultures

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. It recommends a balanced approach in which systematic instruction and immersion in reading and writing play complementary roles.

Importance 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; 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.

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 boldface 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). Success in acquiring language is also a motivator and leads to increased language acquisition.

Importance of the Students’ Experiences and Cultures

Although based on language, reading is also experiential. One second-grade class was reading a story that took place in a Laundromat. None of the children had ever been to a Laundromat or even heard of one, so they found the story confusing. Reading is not so much getting meaning from a story as it is bringing meaning to it. The more the reader brings to a story, the more
she or he will be able to take away. For example, the child who can’t seem to sit still will readily empathize with the boy in *Sit Still* (Carlson, 1996). In this instance, reading evokes an emotional response as well as an intellectual one.

Living as we do in a multicultural, pluralistic society, it is also important for us to explore and understand the literacy histories and cultural backgrounds 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, the school should build on the children’s experiences and develop and reinforce the skills and values important to their culture(s) as well as those important to the school.

### Status of Literacy

Because it assesses a national sample of fourth-graders, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides a kind of outcome measure of the results of literacy instruction in the early grades. According to NAEP, some 67 percent of fourth-graders can read at least on a basic level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Some 34 percent of fourth-graders performed at or above the proficient level. About 8 percent of fourth-graders performed at the advanced level. The basic level is roughly equal to the level set by many states. It is at or slightly below grade level. The proficient level is apparently above grade level (Pellegrino, Jones, & Mitchell, 1999).

### Common Core State Standards

Current emphasis in literacy education is preparing all students to be college- and career-ready (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This has led to widespread adoption of 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 for English Language Arts and also Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects at http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.
The Common Core State Standards emphasize 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).

**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.

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. An effect size of 6 months would mean that the average participant gained 6 months more than nonparticipants. 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 thirty-four points. If students were at the 50th percentile (an average rank) before the treatment, they would be at the 84th 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.

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

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**FYI**

Common Core Curriculum Maps, English Language Arts, Grades K-5 (Common Core, 2012) provides sample units and lessons for each of the Common Core Standards. Curriculum maps are also available at commoncore.org/maps.

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The effect size is the degree to which the experimental group did better than a matched group of students on achievement or some other outcome. 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).
rubrics. These are key elements, of course, 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 1.2 shows the effect sizes of a number of instructional elements.

Visible Teaching and Learning

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

Visible teaching and learning occurs 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

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<tr>
<th>TABLE 1.2  Effect Sizes of Selected Instructional Elements</th>
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<td><strong>Element</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tracking progress</td>
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<td>Intervention</td>
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<td>Teacher clarity</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
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<td>Teacher–student relationships</td>
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<td>Setting goals</td>
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<td>Professional development</td>
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<td>Student engagement</td>
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<td>Not labeling students</td>
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<td>Teaching strategies</td>
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<td>Direct instruction</td>
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<td>Teaching vocabulary</td>
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<td>Home environment</td>
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<td>Socioeconomic status</td>
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<td>Classroom cohesion</td>
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<td>Peer influences</td>
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<td>Classroom management</td>
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<td>Parental involvement</td>
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<td>Small-group learning</td>
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<td>Concentration/persistence/engagement</td>
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<td>Preschool program</td>
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<td>Expectations</td>
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<td>Practice</td>
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<td>Recognition of students' efforts</td>
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</table>
when there are active, passionate, and engaging people (teacher, students, 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 two features. The first, entitled Extending and Applying, will ask you to extend your knowledge of key effective practices and apply them. Professional Reflection will ask you 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) and Charlotte Danielson (2010), and those used by charter schools such as Achievement First (2010) and by school districts such as the District of Columbia (2010) and also the IRA Standards for Reading Professionals. The Professional Reflection features 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 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 adding elements that are missing.

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

- **Standard deviation** 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.
- **Percentile rank** is the point on a scale of 1 to 99 that shows what percentage of students obtained an equal or lower score. A percentile rank of 75 means that the person scored higher than 75 percent of those who took the test.
Chapter 1 The Nature of Literacy and Today’s Children

Literacy and Technology: The New Literacies

The average 5- to 8-year-old spends more than 4 hours each day with recreational media (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Gutnick, Robb, Takeuchi, & Kotler, 2011). 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 nearly 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. Because of its unlimited and unregulated content, however, 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, “[t]he 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.

A Reading and Writing Program for Today’s Students

The world is growing ever more complex, and so the demands for literacy are increasing. Functioning in today’s global society requires a higher degree of literacy than did functioning in society before the days of the information superhighway. Requirements for tomorrow’s citizens will be higher yet. Today’s and tomorrow’s readers need to be selective and efficient. Bombarded with information, students must be able to select the information that is important to them. They must also be efficient.
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. When all is said and done, however, 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 “aliterate”: They can read, but they do not, at least not on a regular basis. Only 57 percent of students ages 6 to 8 are frequent readers, which means they read at least five days a week. That percentage drops to 28 percent for 9- to 11-year-olds (Harrison Group, 2010). Based on their analysis of a large number of studies on independent and/or practice reading, Lewis and Samuels (2003) found that additional reading was beneficial for all students. For average students, it added about 17 percentile points, or a half-year’s gain in reading, but it was especially beneficial for English learners and struggling readers. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011), students who report reading for fun score the highest. Those who report reading the least for fun, or not at all, had the lowest scores.

Using children’s books in the reading program not only leads to an opportunity for a greater enjoyment of reading but also builds skill in reading. In addition, allowing some self-selection should produce students who can and do read.

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)

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 and avoidance 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) suggested that students do best with reading materials in which no more than 2 to 5 percent of the words are difficult for them. Along with text that they can handle with relative ease, students also need to be provided with challenging text, and the support needed to read that text, so that they are prepared to read and write about complex text.

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. **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 Arizona reading about an ice hockey game may have no experience either playing 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 because 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. **Promote independence.** Whenever you teach a skill or strategy, ask yourself: How can I teach this so students will eventually use it on their own? How will students be called upon 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. **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.

   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-band 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)

   Intervention programs are especially effective when systematic phonics is featured along with lots of reading and writing (Santa & Høien, 1999). 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).

   Classroom teachers estimate that as many as one student out of four is reading more than one year below grade level (Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, & Ro, 2000).

   Given the large number of struggling readers and writers in today’s elementary schools, this text has numerous suggestions for helping these students and concludes each instructional chapter with a section entitled Help for Struggling Readers and Writers, which discusses steps classroom teachers might take to help underachieving students.

7. **The literacy program should be goal-oriented and systematic.** In keeping with the current concern about preparing all students to be college- and career-ready and the widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), 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. **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 a 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). The aim of a literacy program is to produce engaged readers and writers. Engaged readers and writers are motivated, are knowledgeable, and have mastered key strategies. They also do well when working with others (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997).

9. **Ongoing assessment is an essential element in an effective literacy program.** Teachers need to know how students are progressing so they can give 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. Suggestions for assessment can be found in annotations in the margins and in Chapter 3. In addition, the appendix features several assessment instruments.

10. **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 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 students’ reading level. The level of material that a student can understand orally is a good gauge of the level that a 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.

Although a great variety of topics will be covered in later chapters, the ten primary principles discussed above 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.

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**Reflection**

What steps might you take to become a highly effective teacher? What step would you take first? Why?

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**Essentials for an Effective Lesson**

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 and 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, 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, with a spirit of mutual cooperation, respect, and a we-are-readers-and-writers attitude. Just as schools and school systems have standards, so, too, do literacy professionals. An overview of the International Reading Association’s Standards for Reading Professionals and a chart showing the chapters in which the standards are addressed are
Chapter 1  The Nature of Literacy and Today’s Children

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 experience and culture. Approaches to teaching reading can be viewed as 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.

Current trends in literacy instruction include research-based instruction, Common Core State Standards, 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 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.
Extending and Applying

1. Analyze your beliefs about teaching reading. Make a list of your major beliefs. Are you a top-down, a bottom-upper, or an interactionist? Now list your major teaching and reinforcement activities. Do they fit your philosophy? If not, what changes might you make?

2. Evaluate your literacy program in terms of the major characteristics listed in this chapter. What are the strengths of your program? What changes might you need to make? How would you go about making those changes?

3. Find out your state's literacy goals or standards and how they are assessed. Most state departments of education list this information on their Web sites. Note whether your state has adopted the Common Core State Standards and, if so, note the plans for implementing and assessing those standards.

4. Many school systems require applicants to submit a portfolio. Some also 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 provides you with the opportunity to reflect on your ideas about teaching and your teaching practices. It will help you get 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. Using the list that you created for Extending and Applying 1, write a statement of your philosophy of teaching reading and writing.

Professional Reflection

Do I

___ have an understanding of the nature of literacy?
___ have a personal philosophy for teaching 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?

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, at http://www.newliteracies.uconn.edu, has a wealth of information about the New Literacies.
Teaching All Students
Anticipation Guide

For each of the following statements related to the chapter you are about to read, put a check under “Agree” or “Disagree” to show how you feel. Discuss your responses with classmates before you read the chapter.

1. By and large, techniques used to teach average students also work with those who have special needs.
   
   Agree [ ] Disagree [ ]

2. Labeling students as reading disabled, learning disabled, or at risk is harmful.
   
   Agree [ ] Disagree [ ]

3. Economically disadvantaged children may have difficulty learning to read because their language is inadequate when they begin school.
   
   Agree [ ] Disagree [ ]

4. It is best to teach English-as-a-second-language students to read in their native language.
   
   Agree [ ] Disagree [ ]

5. Even students with serious reading or other learning disabilities should be taught in the regular classroom.
   
   Agree [ ] Disagree [ ]

6. Structured reading lessons usually work better than unstructured ones.
   
   Agree [ ] Disagree [ ]

7. Critical (evaluative) reading skills have never been more important or more neglected.
   
   Agree [ ] Disagree [ ]

Using What You Know

The United States is the most culturally diverse nation in the world. Dozens of languages are spoken in our schools, and dozens of cultures are represented. Adding to that diversity is the trend toward inclusion. Increasingly, students who have learning or reading disabilities, visual or hearing impairments, emotional or health problems, or other disabilities are being taught in regular classrooms. Because these children have special needs, adjustments may have to be made in their programs so that they can reach their full potential. Adjustments also need to be made for children who are economically disadvantaged or who are still learning English. The gifted and talented also have special needs and require assistance to reach their full potential.
Chapter 2  Teaching All Students

What has been your experience teaching children from other cultures or children who are just learning to speak English? What has been your experience with students who have special needs? Think of some special needs students you have known. What provisions did the school make for these students? Could the school have done more? If so, what? What are some adjustments that you make now or might make in the future for such students?

Teaching All Students

Mandates to prepare every student to be college- and career-ready (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), the response to intervention (RTI) initiative highlighted in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) (2004), and Common Core Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) have brought into focus the importance of providing for all students. An example of an implementation of the concept of providing every student a high-quality education is California’s concept of universal access. As explained in California’s Reading/Language Arts Framework:

The ultimate goal of language arts programs in California is to ensure access to high quality curriculum and instruction for all students in order to meet or exceed the state’s English-language arts content standards. To reach that goal, teachers need assistance in assessing and using results of that assessment for planning programs, differentiating curriculum and instruction, using grouping strategies effectively, and implementing other strategies for meeting the needs of students with reading difficulties, students with disabilities, advanced learners, English learners, and students with combinations of special instructional needs. Procedures that may be useful in planning for universal access are to:

- Assess each student’s understanding at the start of instruction and continue to do so frequently as instruction advances, using the results of assessment for program placement and planning.
- Diagnose the nature and severity of the student’s difficulty and modify curriculum and instruction accordingly when students have trouble with the language arts.
- Engage in careful organization of resources and instruction and planning to adapt to individual needs. A variety of good teaching strategies that can be used according to the situation should be prepared.
- Differentiate when necessary as to depth, complexity, novelty, or pacing and focus on the language arts standards and the key concepts within the standards that students must master to move on to the next grade level.
- Employ flexible grouping strategies according to the students’ needs and achievement and the instructional tasks presented.
- Enlist help from others, such as reading specialists, special education specialists, parents, aides, other teachers, community members, administrators, counselors, and diagnosticians when necessary and
explore technology or other instructional devices or instructional materials, such as Braille text, as a way to respond to students’ individual needs. (California Department of Education, 2007, p. 263)

Teaching Literacy to All Students: Role of RTI

Response to intervention (RTI) has been designed to raise the achievement of all students but especially of those at risk for failure. The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 (PL 108-446) specified a change in the way students are identified as having a learning disability. Previously, students were identified as having a learning disability on the basis of a gap between their ability and their achievement. With IDEIA, they may be identified through a procedure known as response to intervention (RTI) complemented by other indicators or measures.

RTI is a commonsense approach in which struggling students are offered increasingly intensive instruction. Most students respond favorably when provided with added instruction (Scanlon, 2010; Vellutino et al., 1996). Failure to make adequate progress is an indicator of a learning difficulty.

However, RTI is much more than a method for identifying students with learning disabilities. RTI is a whole-school improvement program that enlists all staff members, the community, and parents to ensure that the literacy potential of all students is fully developed. RTI typically consists of three levels of prevention: primary, secondary, and tertiary (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011). The primary level is designed to improve the overall instructional program so that everyone benefits. This means that teachers provide enhanced differentiated instruction so that all students have the opportunity to learn. Students in need may be given added help. If the students continue to lag behind despite being provided with differentiated instruction, they are given supplementary secondary level instruction. This moderately intense intervention is usually provided in a small group for a period of 12 to 20 weeks. If the students still fail to make adequate progress, another secondary intervention might be implemented or the student might be provided tertiary level prevention. This would typically be one-on-one instruction (intervention programs are discussed in Chapter 12). If progress is still inadequate, placement in special education is considered. In some systems, placement in special education is part of the tertiary level.

Universal Screening

The first step in RTI is to screen all students. The screening measure is designed to
identify students who might be at risk, and it is recommended that it be administered three times a year. If given three times a year, students who were doing well in the beginning of the year but have fallen behind can be identified. In addition, screening measures can be used to assess the effectiveness of the classroom program. If large numbers of students are not doing well, this is an indication that the program is not appropriate and/or is not being implemented effectively.

All other things being equal, it is estimated that about 20 percent of public school students will require intervention. Of that 20 percent, 15 percent will need only Tier II (secondary) instruction, but the remaining 5 percent will also need Tier III (tertiary) instruction. On the basis of the screening and other data, instruction is differentiated. Low performers are given extra help from the classroom teacher. Screening at the beginning of the year can overidentify students. The progress of students who do poorly on beginning-of-the-year screenings should be monitored for four or five weeks. If their performance is still below what is expected, they might then be provided with extra instruction in Tier II.

**RTI and English Language Learners**

Some teachers might be hesitant to provide or recommend intervention for English language learners if their language proficiency is low. However, according to Gersten and colleagues (2007), language proficiency is not a good gauge of how students will respond to literacy intervention. When ELLs experience difficulty learning basic decoding skills, teachers might attribute this to a lack of adequate English and decide to wait until the student acquires more English (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). This tactic delays intervention. Just as a proportion of native English speakers experience difficulty learning decoding skills, so, too, do a proportion of ELLs. Besides, the skills worked on during intervention will build students’ language. However, instruction should be geared to the students’ level of language development. Students should have sufficient command of English so that they are able to benefit from decoding instruction. Intervention in literacy in the students’ native language would also be of benefit because it would build skills that would transfer to English literacy.

**Monitoring Progress**

Continuous monitoring of progress is a key component of RTI. The first steps in progress monitoring are to establish where students are and set goals or benchmarks. Then progress toward reaching those goals or benchmarks can be monitored. Results are used to see if the students are making adequate progress and to plan more intensive instruction, if needed.
The progress of all students should be monitored at least three times a year. The screening assessments can also be used as monitoring measures. Students judged to be at risk should be monitored more frequently. Depending upon the seriousness of their difficulty, they might be monitored monthly, biweekly, or even weekly. Ongoing information about student progress is needed to determine if programs and behavioral supports are working (DeRuvo & Barcus, 2008). Because reading is complex, multiple measures should be used to monitor students’ progress. If, for instance, oral reading fluency is the screening and monitoring measure used, this should be complemented with data from other measures of comprehension including observations and work samples. See Chapter 3 for more information on screening and monitoring.

Collaboration
RTI requires a high level of collaboration. A schoolwide learning team sets up the framework for RTI and makes decisions about core curriculum and intervention approaches. Students’ behavior is also addressed in RTI. The schoolwide team establishes a behavior management system and behavior intervention programs. Grade-level or other teams meet to analyze data and decide whether the core program is effective and to plan ways of increasing its effectiveness. These teams also discuss the progress of pupils, ways to differentiate instruction more efficiently, and other classroom concerns. Another team composed of the school psychologist, reading specialist, special education teacher, and classroom teachers meets to plan interventions for those students who are not making adequate progress in the core program.

Impact of RTI on Your Teaching
As a classroom teacher, you will have primary responsibility for implementing Tier I and, in varying degrees, Tier II interventions. As part of Tier I, you will be working to improve your classroom program and implement it with fidelity to make it as effective as possible. You will be looking for gaps in the program and ways to close those gaps. You might meet with other teachers in your grade level or department to discuss ways to improve the program. You will be examining data to get a sense of the overall effectiveness of the program and the progress of students so that you can identify those who need more help. You will be differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students but especially those who struggle. You will be closely monitoring students who struggle to see how they are responding to instruction. Depending upon your school’s program, you might also be called upon to provide some Tier II instruction. Even if another professional provides Tier II instruction, you will need to be knowledgeable
about the instruction so that you can coordinate your efforts with those of the Tier II instructor. Best results are obtained when intervention supports the classroom program. In the event that Tier III instruction is required, you will also be coordinating that intervention. Chances are you will also be called on to take part in meetings to discuss the progress of struggling students in your class and to help plan an intervention program. You will be part of a team dedicated to helping all students attain the highest level of literacy of which they are capable.

Providing for the Literacy Needs of All Students

With the recognition that classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, attempts are being made to provide for the literacy needs of all students. Providing effective instruction requires, first of all, that we get a sense of the diversity of students in today’s classrooms. Currently more than 50 million students are enrolled in public schools (Aud et al., 2010). Forty-three percent of public school students are considered to be part of a racial or ethnic minority group, an increase from 22 percent in 1972. The increase is mainly due to the growth in the number of Hispanic students. Hispanic students currently represent 20 percent of public school enrollment, up from 6 percent in 1972.

Adding to this linguistic, ethnic, and racial diversity in today’s classrooms is the inclusion of students with special needs: students who have learning or reading disabilities or physical or emotional difficulties, who are living in poverty, or who need to be challenged because of special gifts or talents they possess. About 6.6 million students, or 13 percent of the school population, is served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). About 57 percent of these students spend most of their day in a regular class (Aud et al., 2010). In the typical classroom, as many as one student in three may fit into one or more of these categories and be in need of some sort of differentiation and/or extra attention to reach his or her full literacy potential.

Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students

It is important to value and build on every student’s culture. Children from diverse cultures may not see the connection between their culture and school. First and foremost, it is essential that teachers become acquainted with the children’s culture, especially if the teachers’ backgrounds are different from those of the children they teach (Strickland, 1998). Reading, discussions with the children, visits to homes, and interaction with those who are knowledgeable about the various cultures represented in the classroom are some informal ways of obtaining information. The teacher should
constantly seek to know the literary heritage of the cultures, especially how literacy is used. For example, according to Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), African American families may read for a wide range of purposes, but the school often fails to reinforce the purposes for reading and writing taught in the home. According to Goldenberg (1994), parents of Hispanic students have high academic aspirations for their children, but the school may not realize this.

Understanding students’ cultural backgrounds can lead to more effective teaching. Cultural groups might socialize their children and have expectations that put children at a disadvantage when they attend school. For instance, children of Mexican immigrants are taught to be passive around adults. They are also discouraged from showing off what they know (Valdes, 1996). However, in the typical public school classroom, students are expected to be assertive and demonstrate their knowledge. As a result of a lack of assertiveness and a failure to display what they know, children of Mexican immigrants were judged to be lacking in skills and background knowledge and were placed in lower reading groups.

English Language Learners

Some 21 percent of children ages 5 to 17 (or 10.9 million) speak a language other than English at home, and 5 percent (or 2.7 million) speak English with difficulty (Aud et al., 2010). Seventy-five percent of those who speak English with difficulty speak Spanish. *English language learners (ELLs)* is the most widely used term for “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 English” (National Clearinghouse for English Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2008). Children in U.S. schools today come from more than a hundred language communities. Among the languages spoken, in order of number of speakers, are Spanish, Vietnamese, Hmong, Haitian Creole, Korean, Arabic, Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, Tagalog, Navajo, Khmer, Portuguese, Urdu, Chinese (Mandarin), Serbo-Croatian, Lao, and Japanese.

English language learners have diverse backgrounds. Some are new arrivals; others were born in the mainland United States but grew up in a home where a language other than English was spoken. Some new arrivals have a rich educational background and are literate in their native language. Others have never been to school, or their schooling was interrupted. Some are solidly middle class. However, a large number live in poverty.

The question of how ELL students should be taught to read and write strikes at the core of what reading is, that is, a language activity. Using prior experience and knowledge of language, the reader constructs meaning. Common sense and research (Fillmore & Valdez, 1986) dictate that the...
best way to teach reading and writing to ELLs is to teach them in their native language. Learning to read and learning to write are complex tasks that involve the total language system: the semantic, syntactic, and phonological. Until children have a basic grasp of the meaning of a language, they will be unable to read it. Even if they are able to sound out the words, the words have no meaning for them.

The prestigious Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children recommends teaching ELL students to read in their native language while, at the same time, teaching them to speak English as a second language (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Once they have a sufficient grasp of English and of basic reading in their native language, they can then learn to read in English. This type of program has several advantages. First of all, children build a solid foundation in their native tongue. With language development, thinking skills are enhanced, concepts are clarified and organized, and children learn to use language in an abstract way. Because they are also learning math, science, and social studies in their native language, background experience is being developed.

Thinking skills, background of knowledge, and reading skills learned in students' native language transfer to reading and writing in English. One objection to a bilingual approach is that it delays instruction in reading and writing in English, thereby causing children to lose ground. Research clearly indicates that this is not the case. In several studies, students taught to read in their native language and then later in a second language outperformed those taught to read in the second language (Modiano, 1968). Furthermore, as they progressed through the grades, the difference between the two groups increased (Rosier, 1977). Learning to read in their native language provides ELLs with a solid foundation for learning to read in another language (Constantino, 1999).

The key to a successful bilingual reading program may lie in knowing when to start instruction in the second language. Students should first read relatively proficiently in their native language. A number of bilingual Spanish–English reading systems include one component in Spanish and one in English. Some also include a transitional component that eases the transfer from Spanish into English.

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Only** Not all ELLs have access to a bilingual program. If the only program offered is one that teaches the students English as a second language, it is best to delay formal reading instruction until the children have a reasonable command of English (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). However, students can engage in shared reading, complete language-experience stories, and read predictable books as they learn English. They should also be encouraged to write as best they can. As they gain proficiency in oral English, they can tackle increasingly complex
reading and writing tasks. Their oral-language skills will support their reading and writing, and their reading and writing will reinforce and build oral-language skills.

The classroom teacher’s role is to support the efforts of these bilingual and/or ESL professionals by meeting regularly with them and mutually planning activities that will enhance students’ progress. Even after students have finished the ESL program, they still require special language-development activities. Some adjustments that might be made to adapt the classroom instruction to ELLs’ needs are described in the paragraphs that follow.

Provide a Secure Environment

The first step in helping ELLs build literacy is to provide a safe, secure, and caring environment (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). As a teacher you can acquire basic information about the newcomer, seat the student close to you so that you can supply guidance as needed, and assign a buddy. Having a buddy, preferably one who speaks the newcomer’s language, will help a newcomer feel welcome and adjust to the school’s routines. The buddy can accompany the newcomer during the school day and explain classroom procedures and how to use the cafeteria, line up for the bus, and other routines; such conversation builds language skills. You can also make sure that the newcomer becomes part of the classroom community by introducing him or her, providing information about his or her country of origin, and integrating him or her into the classroom’s cooperative groups.

Build Language The ELL students’ greatest need is to develop skills in understanding and using English. Special emphasis should be placed on school-type language. As students learn English, they first acquire functional structures that allow them to greet others, make conversational statements, and ask questions. This type of everyday communication is heavily contextualized and is augmented by gestures, pointing at objects, and pantomiming. It takes approximately two years for students to become socially proficient in English (Cummins, 2001). However, schooling demands academic language, which is more varied and abstract and relatively decontextualized. This is the language in which math procedures and subject-matter concepts are explained. Proficiency in academic English may take up to five years or more. Even though ELL students may seem proficient in oral English, they may have difficulty with academic language. Mastery of conversational English may mask deficiencies in important higher-level language skills (Sutton, 1989). Because of the time required to acquire academic language, English learners may not demonstrate their true abilities on achievement and cognitive ability tests administered in English.
Chapter 2  Teaching All Students

Increasing the amount of oral language in the classroom enhances English speaking. Structure conversations at the beginning of the school day and at other convenient times to talk about current events, weather, hobbies, sports, or other topics of interest. Encourage students to participate in discussions and provide opportunities for them to use “language for a broad variety of functions, both social and academic” (Allen, 1991, p. 362).

When they first enter a school environment in which English is spoken, ELLs may continue to use their native tongue. When they find that this isn’t working, many of these students enter a nonverbal period, which may last a few weeks, a few months, or even an entire year. They use gestures and other nonverbal strategies to communicate. Gradually, the children use increasingly complex English to communicate. At first, ELLs learn object names: blocks, water, paint, books. They might also use commands or comments such as stop, okay, ub-ob, please, yes, no, bi, and bye-bye. They also pick up a series of useful expressions or routine statements, such as “Good morning.” “What’s happening?” “How did you do this?” They progress to useful sentence structures, such as “I want _________” or “I like _________,” which they complete using a variety of words.

Provide Comprehensible Input

The key to developing language is to provide comprehensible input (Krashen, 2003). To make input more comprehensible, modify the language to make it more accessible. Modification includes speaking more slowly, emphasizing the pronunciation of key words, using shorter sentences, simplifying the syntax, and using a more basic vocabulary. In some instances, you might provide a more elaborate explanation in which each step is more clearly expressed (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). Use the same set of directions for key tasks and routines. Also scaffold language comprehension and development. Use gestures or actions along with words. The request “Line up for lunch” might be accompanied by a gesture for lining up and a gesture for eating (Tabors, 1997). Be repetitious. Repeating statements, key phrases, or words provides ELLs with an added opportunity to catch what is being said (Tabors, 1997). To facilitate understanding of oral language, add illustrative elements to discussions. Use objects, models, and pictures to illustrate vocabulary words that might be difficult. Role-play situations and pantomime activities. When talking about rocks in a geology unit, bring some in and hold them up when mentioning their names. When discussing a story about a tiger, point to a picture of the tiger. When introducing a unit on magnets, hold up a magnet every time you use the word; point to the poles each time you mention them. Supplement oral directions with gestures and demonstrations. Think of yourself as an actor in a silent movie who must use body language to convey meaning.

FYI

- Shared readings from a big book, choral readings, and songs can be used to develop oral-language fluency. Scripts, dramatized stories, and reader’s theater might also be used.
- Through reading books such as The Star Fisher (Yep, 1991) and Dragonwings (Yep, 1975), students whose families immigrated to the United States from other countries learn that others also face problems as they adjust to a new culture (Miller, 2000).
- Before students read a piece, activate their prior knowledge. Because of cultural and linguistic differences, students might not realize that they have background to bring to a story or article. Also, emphasize comprehension over pronunciation (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994).
Find out what words, if any, the student knows in English and build on those. On the other side of the coin, learn a few key expressions in the student’s home language and use them: “It is time for lunch.” “Line up for lunch.” “Line up for recess.” “Take out your reading books.” Obtain these expressions from online sources, parents, other children who speak the student’s language, or the bilingual teacher.

The good news is that ELLs placed in an English-speaking classroom can and do make progress. They develop speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills when their teachers believe that they can learn and present them with meaningful instruction and activities, even though the teachers may not have any training teaching ELLs. Although these students have some success, they would more than likely do even better if teachers were trained or took special steps to assist them (Weber & Longhi-Chirlin, 2001). Some techniques for helping students learn English include modeling, running commentary, expansions, and redirects.

**Modeling**
Modeling consists of demonstrating some language element that the student is having difficulty with or needs to learn. For instance, to model the use of *this is* and *these are*, you might say, “This is my pencil. These are my pencils. This is my book. These are my books.” The student is offered the opportunity to use the constructions but is not required to do so. She or he may need more time to assimilate the structures.

**Running Commentary**
In a running commentary, you take the role of a sports announcer and describe a process that you are carrying out (Bunce, 1995): “To make a paper bag puppet, first I ________, then I ________, and then I ________.” The running commentary helps acquaint students with vocabulary and sentence structure. Because it accompanies an activity, it is concrete. It also provides insight into the teacher’s thought processes and problem-solving strategies. Running commentary should be used selectively; if overused, it can be overwhelming to students. It is best used when a process or activity is being demonstrated.

**Expansion**
In an expansion, you repeat the student’s statement but supply a missing part. For example, if a student says, “Car red,” you say, “Yes, the car is red.” This affirms the student’s comment but also gives the student a model of a more advanced form (Bunce, 1995).
Redirect

In a redirect, you encourage a student who has asked you a question or made a request to direct it to another student. If a student says that he wants to play with the blocks, but Martin is playing with them, you direct him to ask Martin. If necessary, you provide a prompt, “Say to Martin, ‘May I play with the blocks?’” This prompting fosters both social and language growth.

Increasing the amount of oral language in the classroom enhances English speaking. Structure conversations at the beginning of the school day and at other convenient times to talk about current events, weather, hobbies, sports, or other topics of interest. Encourage students to participate in discussions and provide opportunities for them to use “language for a broad variety of functions, both social and academic” (Allen, 1991, p. 362).

Build Academic Language

Special emphasis should be placed on academic language. As students learn English, they first acquire functional structures that allow them to greet others, make conversational statements, and ask questions. This type of everyday communication is heavily contextualized and is augmented by gestures, pointing at objects, and pantomiming. It takes approximately two years for students to become socially proficient in English (Cummins, 2001). However, schooling demands academic language, which is more varied and abstract and relatively decontextualized. This is the language in which math procedures and subject-matter concepts are explained. Cummins referred to everyday functional language as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and to decontextualized school-type language as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Proficiency in academic English may take up to five years or more to attain. Even though ELLs may seem proficient in oral English, they may have difficulty with academic language. Mastery of conversational English may mask deficiencies in important higher-level language skills (Sutton, 1989). Because of the time required to acquire academic language, ELLs may not demonstrate their true abilities on achievement and cognitive ability tests administered in English.

Learning academic language is more than just learning big words. As Zwiers (2008) explains, it also means learning the smaller words, the grammar, and the thinking skills necessary to put the big words together in an understandable text or utterance. Academic language includes the thinking skills of analyzing, explaining, inferring, and organizing as well as language skills. It requires the ability to think and talk about language as well as use language. And it requires acquisition of background knowledge on a wide range of topics and

- Academic language is abstract, decontextualized, school-type language that is used to understand and express complex ideas.
ideas. “Teachers further the acquisition of CALP by analyzing the conceptual and critical thinking of grade-level curriculum and taking the time to ensure that all students are explicitly taught such requirements” (Díaz-Rico, 2004, p. 305).

Academic vocabulary can be thought of as bricks and mortar (Dutro & Moran, 2003). Bricks are the content-specific technical words such as *cells, nucleus, hypotenuse*, and *democracy*. Mortar consists of the words used to articulate the concepts represented by the technical words: *require, causation, temporary, determine*. Mortar words can be even more abstract than brick words. Mortar words are also used to describe academic tasks: *describe, analyze, compare*. Academic language also includes stock phrases, which use figurative language: *when all is said and done, read between the lines, see eye to eye* (Zwiers, 2008).

**Academic Word List (AWL)**

Academic words can be divided into two categories: all-purpose words that appear widely in academic texts but not in everyday texts and technical words that tend to be discipline-specific (Snow, 2009). Content teachers typically present the technical words necessary to understand key concepts in their disciplines but are less likely to introduce the academic words used to explain the concepts (Snow, 2009). Lack of academic language and especially academic vocabulary has been described as a lexical bar, one that blocks the progress of a large number of students (Corson, 1995). The academic word list (AWL) provides a practical starting point for developing the needed academic language skills.

Because it has been drawn from college texts, the AWL has been adapted. Words not typically found in elementary or secondary texts have been eliminated. The adapted AWL is presented in Table 2.1. In the adapted AWL, words are listed according to two levels of tested difficulty: basic and intermediate. Basic words are those known by 40 to 80 percent of students at the end of grade 2. Intermediate words are those known by at least 40 to 80 percent of students in grade 6. Each level is split in two, with the first half being composed of the higher-frequency words and the second half being composed of the lower-frequency words in that level.

Some additional techniques you can use to foster both general and academic language follow.

**Using Cued Elicitation Questions**

Cued elicitation questions incorporate a portion of the response: “Gold is called a precious metal because __________.” “The main character in this story is similar to the main character in __________.” Use restatements and other devices to encourage the students to use more specific or more abstract language (Edwards & Mercer, 1993; Zwiers, 2008).
## TABLE 2.1 Adapted Academic Word List

### Adapted Academic Word List: Basic A1 and A2

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### Adapted Academic Word List: Intermediate B1 and B2

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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>transport</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Using a Hierarchy of Questions

Match the difficulty level of questions with the students’ level of English. At the lowest level, students might nod or shake their heads or answer yes or no. Either/or questions can be used once students are speaking: “Is this line the latitude or the longitude?” Wh- questions come next, with why questions being posed last (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 2002).

Sentence Starters and Word Walls

As you teach new procedures, routines, and concepts, post a list of words needed to carry out those procedures or routines and talk and write about the new concepts. Create a wall of needed words and expressions that students might refer to and that you might review periodically. Also provide sentences that students might use to take part in a discussion: “I think the main character was brave, and here is why I think so. The main character ________.” Sentence starters can be used in speaking in much the same way as they are used in writing.
Chapter 2  Teaching All Students

Checking Understanding
You should check periodically for understanding. This can be done continually as you look for signs of understanding. Or it can be done by asking the students to give a thumbs up if they understand or a thumbs down if they don’t. You might also ask students if they understand, but some students might be reluctant to admit that they don’t. Follow up by asking students to show what they are expected to do or explain the concept being discussed or answer a question about it. Students should be taught how to seek help when they don’t understand (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). On a practical note, teach students how to ask questions such as, “I don’t understand. Could you explain that again?” or “I am not sure what to do. Could you show me?” Also explain to students that if they are reluctant to ask for an explanation during class, they might approach the teacher after class.

Correcting Errors
Focus on meaning rather than on correcting errors. Correcting errors during an interchange can be embarrassing and will probably limit a student’s willingness to take risks with language. You might provide a rephrase, as long as you believe it will be helpful and not discouraging to the student, or schedule a language session later.

Student: There are too many noises in the room. My ears pain.
Teacher: Yes, there is too much noise in the room. No wonder your ears hurt.

Using the Student’s Language
Also plan strategic use of the student’s native language. Use that level of English that the student is familiar with. However, for developing complex concepts, use the student’s native language, if possible, or ask another student who speaks the language to provide a translation. That way the student doesn’t have the burden of trying to understand difficult concepts expressed in terms that may be hard to understand.

Gearing Instruction to Stages of Second-Language Acquisition
Although there is some overlap among stages, a second language develops in approximately five stages (see Table 2.2): preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate, and advanced. (Stages are adapted from Diaz-Rico, 2004; Guzman-Johannessen, 2006; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003.) Gear questions and other activities to students’ language level (Lalas, Solomon, & Johannessen, 2006). For the lowest levels,
for instance, ask what, who, and where questions. These can be answered with single words. Progress to when questions, which might demand a phrase, and then to how and why questions, which require more elaborated language.

In preparation for teaching ELLs, take note of the students’ level of knowledge and language. Plan for the kinds of difficulties they might experience. Ask yourself, “What specifically am I going to do to increase comprehensibility? How will I differentiate for ELLs at different levels?” Develop knowledge of text structures and use graphic organizers. Go through each chapter in any text you plan to use and note features, such as illustrations, that will be of help to ELLs. After each lesson,
reflect. Ask yourself, “Have I fostered language development? Was I able to make the text accessible?” (Lalas, Solomon, & Johannessen, 2006).

**Use Cooperative Learning and Peer Tutoring Strategies**

Working with peers provides excellent opportunities for ELLs to apply language skills. In a small group, they are less reluctant to speak. In addition, they are better able to make themselves understood and better able to understand others. Working with buddies and in small groups provides context and fosters language learning (Cummins, 1994).

**Reading Program for ELLs**

A reading program for ELL students should include children’s books. “Children’s books can provide a rich input of cohesive language, made comprehensible by patterned language, predictable structure, and strong, supportive illustrations” (Allen, 1994, pp. 117–118). Children's books can be used as a stimulus for discussion, show objects that ELL students may not be familiar with, and build concepts. Books that are well illustrated and whose illustrations support the text are especially helpful. A predictable book such as *Cat on the Mat* (Wildsmith, 1982) repeats the simple pattern “The _____ sat on the mat.” Eric Carle’s *Have You Seen My Cat?* repeats the question pattern “Have you seen my _____?” For older, more advanced students, First Fact books such as *The Sun* (Winrich, 2005) use primarily simple subject-verb-object sentences. Such books build knowledge of basic syntactical patterns as well as vocabulary. After reading texts of this type, students might use the patterns in their oral language and writing.

To facilitate understanding of oral language, add illustrative elements to discussions. Use objects, models, and pictures to illustrate vocabulary words that might be difficult. Role-play situations and pantomime activities. When talking about rocks in an earth science unit, bring some in and hold them up when mentioning their names. When discussing a story about a tiger, point to a picture of the tiger. When introducing a unit on magnets, hold up a magnet every time you use the word; point to the poles each time you mention them. Supplement oral directions with gestures and demonstrations. Think of yourself as an actor in a silent movie who must use body language to convey meaning.

**Use Print**

Use print to support and expand the oral-language learning of English learners. Label items in the room. Write directions, schedules, and similar information about routines on the chalkboard. As you write them, read them orally (Sutton, 1989). Also encourage students to write:

Provide experiences in which language is greatly contextualized (as, for example, a field trip, a science experiment, role playing, planning a class party,
solving a puzzle). Use print materials with these activities as a natural extension of the oral language generated: write a class language experience report about the field trip; record information on a science chart; write dialogues or captions for a set of pictures; make lists of party items needed; follow written directions to find a hidden treasure. (p. 686)

Adapt Instruction

Compare the child’s native language with English and note features that might cause difficulty, then provide help in those areas. For example, some major differences between Spanish and English are summarized in Table 2.3 (O’Brien, 1973). Other differences between Spanish and English include a lack of contractions in Spanish and confusion caused by idiomatic expressions, such as “shoot down the street” and “call up a friend.” Another difference has to do with relationships between speakers and listeners. In Hispanic cultures, for example, it is customary to avert one’s eyes when speaking to persons in authority. However, for many cultural groups, the opposite is true. Students learning English should learn the cultural expectations of the language along with vocabulary and syntax.

Adapt lessons to meet the needs of English learners. When teaching a reading lesson, examine the text for items that might cause special problems. Pay particular attention to the following items:

- **Vocabulary** What vocabulary words might pose problems for ELLs? Unfamiliar vocabulary is a major stumbling block for ELLs. They may not be familiar with a number of common English words.
- **Background of experience** What background is needed to understand the selection? Coming from diverse lands, ELLs may not have the experiences assumed by the selection’s author.
- **Syntax** Does the selection use sentence patterns that the student might have difficulty with? Is there a heavy use of contractions?
- **Semantics** Might certain figures of speech or idiomatic expressions cause confusion?
- **Culture** What cultural items might cause problems in understanding the selection? For instance, some ELL students from traditional cultures might have difficulty understanding the casual relationship that children in the mainstream culture have with authority figures.

The teacher does not have to attempt to present all potentially confusing items. Those most important to a basic understanding of the selection should be chosen. Some potentially difficult items might be discussed after the story has been read.

Of course, as with any group of students, care must be taken to explain to English learners concepts and vocabulary that could hinder their understanding, as well as to build background and activate schemata. Before students read a piece, activate their prior knowledge.

The first reading of a selection should be silent. Because English learners are still learning English, the temptation is to have them read orally.
However, this turns the reading lesson into a speech lesson. Plan legitimate activities for purposeful oral rereading after the selection has been read silently and discussed.

Chances are good that English language learners will read more slowly than native speakers of English. Because they are learning the language, it will take longer to process. In addition, until their recognition of English words becomes automatic, they may have to translate words from English into their native tongue. Seeing the word *cow*, the student may have to search his or her lexicon for the Spanish equivalent of *cow*: *vaca*. The extra step slows down the reading.

### TABLE 2.3 Areas of Special Difficulty for Native Speakers of Spanish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonological</th>
<th>Morphological</th>
<th>Syntactical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer vowel sounds: no short <em>a</em> (hat), short <em>i</em> (fish), short <em>u</em> (up), short double <em>o</em> (took), or schwa (sofa).</td>
<td><em>de</em> (of) used to show possession: Joe’s pen becomes <em>the pen of Joe</em>.</td>
<td>use of <em>no</em> for <em>not</em>: He no do his homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer consonant sounds: no <em>/j</em> (jump), <em>/v</em> (vase), <em>/z</em> (zipper), <em>/ʃ</em> (shoe), <em>/ŋ</em> (sing), <em>/hw</em> (when), <em>/zh</em> (beige).</td>
<td><em>mas</em> (more) used to show comparison: faster becomes more fast.</td>
<td>no s for plural: my two friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from C. A. O’Brien, *Teaching the Language-Different Child to Read*, Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1973.*

Recently arrived from Southeast Asia, Nora’s command of English is limited. Realizing that Nora and several of her ELL classmates will have difficulty with the concept of the water cycle if it is presented in the typical manner, the teacher uses a heavily illustrated big book to present the concept. In her lesson, she will build language as well as content knowledge. Her content objective is that students will be able to represent the water cycle in a series of drawings. Her language objective is that students will be able to explain the water cycle orally in simple sentences. As she reads the brief sentences in the big book, Nora’s teacher tracks print. When she comes to key content words such as *clouds*, she points to the illustration of the clouds.

After reading the book, she shows the students gestures for *clouds, rain*, and other content words. For guided practice, she has students mime or say key words when she points to pictures that illustrate them. As an application, she gives students a booklet that has sentences that describe the four phases of the rain cycle. Students are asked to draw illustrations for the sentences. To assess students, she notes at various points of the lesson whether students can identify key words or illustrate the sentences describing the water cycle. Students are also asked to retell the description of the water cycle (Echevarria, 1998).
Use a Language-Experience Approach  A language-experience approach avoids the problem of unfamiliar syntax and vocabulary because children read selections that they dictate. Some students might dictate stories that contain words in both English and their native tongue. This should be allowed and could be an aid as the student makes the transition to English.

Although students are learning to read in English, they should still be encouraged to read in their native tongue if they are literate in that language. In the classroom library, include books written in the various languages of English learners. Because Spanish is spoken by a large proportion of the U.S. population, a number of books are published in Spanish, including both translations and original works. Most of the major educational and children’s book publishers offer translations of favorite books.

When responding to questions or retelling a story, students should be encouraged to use their native language if they cannot respond in English. Being able to use their native language helps students to express ideas that they might not have the words for in English. If you don’t speak the student’s native language, you might ask the student to translate for you. If the student is unable to translate, perhaps another student in the class can do so (Kamil & Bernhardt, 2001). One way of building vocabulary is to create a word wall or charts of words in English and Spanish or other languages. If the class is about to read a selection about snakes, you might list key words such as snakes, poisonous, prey, fangs, and skin in English and in the native language of the ELL students. The ELL students can help you with the words in their native language (Kamil & Bernhardt, 2001).

Informational text, by the way, may be easier for English language learners to read than narrative text. This is especially true if the informational text is developing topics with which ELL students are familiar. In addition, informational text tends to be more culture-free than narrative text, so ELLs are not puzzled by unfamiliar customs that may be mentioned in narrative texts (Kamil & Bernhardt, 2001).

Provide Intentional, Systematic Instruction

Instruction in English should be intentional and systematic. A distinguished panel of experts in literacy and language learning recommend the following research-based practices:

Daily academic English instruction should . . . be integrated into the core curriculum. Consider asking teachers to devote a specific block (or blocks) of time each day to building English learners’ academic English . . . . Provide high quality vocabulary instruction throughout the day. Teach essential content words in depth. In addition, use instructional time to address the meanings of common words, phrases, and expressions not yet learned. (Gersten et al., 2007, p. 2)
Hodgkinson (2003) has identified 15 risk factors, which include a number of health and economic factors: poor nutrition, transience, and difficulties in parenting. The number one factor is poverty. Some 50 percent of U.S. children have at least one at-risk factor, with 15 percent having three or more factors (Duncan & Magnson, 2005). The more factors, the greater the risk for academic underachievement. Students raised in poverty are most likely to have several at-risk factors.

**Economically Disadvantaged Students**

The percentage of children living below the poverty level is 22 percent (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2011). More than 10 million of the nation’s school-age children live below the official poverty level. About 800,000 schoolchildren are homeless (Kids Count, 2008). Twenty percent of public elementary schools and 9 percent of public secondary schools in the United States are classified as high-poverty schools, which means that at least 75 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch (Aud et al., 2011). High-poverty schools have teachers who are less...
experienced, are less likely to have advanced degrees, and are more likely to lack certification. Differences in reading achievement between students who attend high-poverty schools and those attending low-poverty schools (25 percent or less qualifying for free or reduced lunch) is dramatic. In 2009, about 55 percent of fourth-graders from high-poverty schools performed below Basic on the NAEP tests, compared with 13 percent of fourth-graders from low-poverty schools. Some research indicates that low-income students progress at approximately the same rate as middle-income students, especially in the early grades (Kahlenberg, 2009). However, low-income students start out behind and sustain a small loss during summer vacations, whereas middle-class students experience small gains (Barton & Cooley, 2008).

Poverty in and of itself does not mean that children cannot and will not be successful in school. For instance, even in the poorest neighborhoods, about one child out of a 100 enters kindergarten knowing letter–sound relationships and how to read words (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000). (The proportion is two out of a hundred for middle-class children.) Because their families and communities generally have fewer resources, however, low-income students are more reliant on schools.

**Principles for Teaching Economically Disadvantaged Children**

**Build Background**  It is important to develop background in reading in all children. For some economically disadvantaged children, this background will have to be extensive. Limited incomes generally mean limited travel and lack of opportunity for vacations, summer camps, and other expensive activities. As Neumann (2006) noted, limited background knowledge may be a cause of future comprehension difficulties. Students who have background knowledge are better able to learn. They need conceptual knowledge that has coherence and depth. This knowledge provides the building blocks for learning. Equalizing resources isn’t sufficient. Because they are typically less prepared, struggling learners need more resources than do achieving students. However, the teacher should not assume that children do not have the necessary background for a particular selection they are about to read. Use a technique such as brainstorming or simple questioning to probe students’ background to avoid making unwarranted assumptions about knowledge.

**Create an Atmosphere of Success**  Teachers sometimes emphasize problems, not successes. MacArthur Award recipient L. D. Delpit (1990) said that teachers must maintain visions of success for students who are disadvantaged—to help them get As, not just pass.
Chapter 2  Teaching All Students

Make Instruction Explicit  Middle-class children are more likely to be taught strategies at home that will help them achieve success in school and are more likely to receive help at home if they have difficulty or fail to understand implicit instruction at school. Low-income children need direct, explicit instruction. If such children do not learn skills at school, family members will be less likely to supply or obtain remedial help for them. Disadvantaged students must have better teaching and more of it (Delpit, 1990).

Provide a Balanced Program  Because the economically disadvantaged as a group do less well on skills tests, teachers may overemphasize basic skills (García, 1990). Economically disadvantaged students need higher-level as well as basic skills and strategies. These skills should be taught in context with plenty of opportunity to apply them to high-quality reading materials and real life.

Provide Access to Books and Magazines  One of the most powerful determiners of how well children read is how much they read. Unfortunately, poor children often have few books in their homes. One study found that poor children, on average, had fewer than three books in their homes. What’s more, their classrooms, schools, and public libraries had far fewer books than did those in more affluent areas (Krashen, 1997–1998). This situation is unfortunate because the number of books a student reads is related to the number of books available and to having a quiet, comfortable place to read (Krashen, 1997–1998).

Counteract the Fourth-Grade Slump  In their study of children of poverty, Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) observed a phenomenon known as the fourth-grade slump. Students perform well in second and third grade on measures of reading and language, although form lags behind content in writing. Beginning in fourth grade, however, many poor students slump in several areas. They have particular difficulty defining abstract, more academically oriented words. In addition to vocabulary, word recognition and spelling scores begin to slip. These are the skills that undergird achievement in reading and writing. They are also the skills for which the schools bear primary responsibility.

The school must teach the vocabulary and concepts necessary to cope with subject-matter texts. Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) recommended systematic teaching of word-recognition skills in the primary grades and the use of children’s books, both informational and fictional, in all grades. “Exposure to books on a variety of subjects and on a wide range of difficulty levels was particularly effective in the development of vocabulary” (p. 155).

As a group, students who are at risk enter kindergarten having had less exposure to literacy activities, have fewer early reading skills, and score
lower on measures of self-regulation (Germeroth, 2009). Starting behind, at-risk students tend to stay behind. A program for at-risk students should include provisions for helping them catch up by providing additional instruction and also develop self-regulatory skills, such as paying attention, following instructions, adhering to classroom procedures, completing tasks, taking turns, and gradually taking control of and using learning strategies.

**Students with Learning Disabilities**

More than 5 percent of all U.S. students ages 3–21 (about 3 million students) have been determined to have a learning disability (Aud et al., 2010). The term *learning disability* is controversial; experts disagree as to what constitutes a learning disability. The most widely followed definition is that used by the federal government and contained in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA (PL 108–446):

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (PL 108–446, section 30[A,B,C])

In the past, a definition based on some measurable discrepancy between performance and ability was used to identify learning disabilities. However, this definition often delayed services because a sufficient discrepancy didn’t show up until students had been in school for several years. School systems now have the option of using response to instruction as an identification tool. The theory is that if students are offered effective, research-based instruction and they fail to make progress, their lack of progress may indicate a learning disability. However, RTI cannot be the sole determining criterion. States must use multiple measures to determine a learning disability.

**Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities**

Because of the broad definition, the learning-disabled group is quite heterogeneous. It includes students who have visual- or auditory-perceptual dysfunction, difficulty paying attention, memory deficits, problems using language to learn, or all of these conditions. Students may have an underlying problem that manifests itself in all school subjects, or the problem may be restricted to a single area, such as reading, writing, or math. The most common reason for referral is a reading problem. About 80 percent of students classified as learning-disabled have a reading difficulty.
Chapter 2  Teaching All Students

Students with Attention Deficit Disorder

About 3 to 5 percent of the school population has attention deficit disorder (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, 2006). Attention deficit disorder (ADD) has as its primary symptom difficulty in focusing and sustaining attention. This may be due to a chemical imbalance and is frequently accompanied by hyperactivity or impulsivity.

ADD is not classified as a learning or reading disorder. A student can have ADD but demonstrate no difficulty learning. However, there is considerable overlap between the two categories. Many students diagnosed as having a learning disability also have difficulty with attention. ADD students do qualify for special services (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

Assisting Students with ADD

The nature and extent of ADD are still being debated. However, it is clear that large numbers of students have difficulty learning because of a problem with attention. Literacy educator Constance Weaver (1994), whose son has been diagnosed as having ADHD (the H stands for “hyperactivity”), has a number of humane and practical suggestions for helping these children. Her chief concern is that we not blame the victim. Instead, she suggests that we look at ways in which we can help the student perform better in school and in which the school can adjust to the student’s characteristics. For instance, ADHD children, by definition, have difficulty sitting still. Why not allow them stretch breaks or the opportunity to participate in projects that involve movement? Instead of just focusing on trying to change the child, teachers need to work with him or her and modify the program.

Other suggestions include the following, many of which would be beneficial to all students:

- Provide students with tasks that are meaningful and interesting.
- Give students a choice of materials and activities.
- Allow mobility in the classroom; use writing, reading, and other learning centers.
- Allow students to confer with peers or work in cooperative groups.
- Minimize formal tests.
- Make sure students understand directions. Establish eye contact. Give directions one step at a time, writing them on the board as you do so. Make sure that the students have copied the directions accurately and understand them.
• When students have homework assignments, make sure they leave with all the necessary materials and directions.
• Help students keep a schedule for major assignments. Break the assignment down into a series of smaller steps. Check to see that each step is completed.
• Use visual aids, such as pictures, the overhead projector, and videos whenever possible.
• Schedule many brief periods of practice for rote material rather than a few long ones.
• Work closely with parents so that the home supports the school’s efforts, and vice versa.
• Minimize distractions. Have ADD students sit near you and put away any books or tools they aren’t using.
• Make sure classroom procedures are clear and everyone understands them (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 1998; Weaver, 1994).
• Highlight important information. In one study, writing the difficult parts of spelling words in red resulted in improved performance for ADD students (Zutell, 1998).
• Use peer tutoring. In several studies, peer tutoring dramatically increased the on-task behavior and performance of both ADD students and non-ADD students (DuPaul & Eckert, 1996).
• Use computers. Computer programs increased the on-task behavior and academic achievement of ADD students. Programs with games and simulations worked better than programs without such incentives (DuPaul & Eckert, 1996).

Students with Intellectual Disabilities

About 1.2 to 1.6 percent of the population is classified as having some degree of intellectual disability, which is sometimes referred to as cognitive disability or mental retardation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Intellectual disability is determined by two criteria: low level of intellectual functioning and deficits in adaptive behavior. Low level of intellectual functioning translates into an IQ score of approximately 70 or less, or two standard deviations below the mean.

A primary problem for students with intellectual disabilities is limited reasoning ability. Through modeling and other techniques, the teacher must make explicit the processes of reading and writing that average students often pick up on their own. Book selection and the use of decoding, comprehension, study, and writing skills have to be modeled carefully and continually. The teacher must also model processes that underlie learning: paying attention, staying on task, listening, and determining relevant information.

For most children who have intellectual disabilities, the major obstacles to reading achievement are vocabulary and conceptual development. Because of

FYI

Currently, about half a million U.S. students are classified as intellectually disabled.

Using Technology

limited cognitive ability and, perhaps, lack of experiential background, they may have difficulty comprehending what they read. They need to have concepts and background built in functional, concrete ways. They also need appropriate materials. Students need materials that appeal to their age but that are on the appropriate reading level. A language-experience approach, because it is based on students’ language, is especially effective.

**Slow Learners**

Functioning generally on a higher level than students with intellectual disabilities but on a lower level than average students are a large number of students known as **slow learners**. They make up approximately 14 percent of the school population. Because they have IQ scores between 70 and 85 (approximately), they function on too high a level to be classified as having intellectual disability but are frequently excluded from learning-disabled and remedial reading programs because their IQ scores are too low for these programs, which often specify that students have scores in the average range. However, that requirement may be changing. Although they have some special needs, slow learners are often denied special services.

Slow learners manifest some of the same characteristics that students with intellectual disabilities display, but to a lesser degree. They tend to be concrete in their thinking, need help with strategies and organization, and are eager for success. They have difficulty with abstract concepts and so need a lot of concrete examples. They also need more practice and more repetition (Cooter & Cooter, 2004). Their executive functioning is on a higher level than that of children with intellectual disabilities. They are better able to decide when and where to use strategies and are better able to classify and group information. They also are more aware of their mental processes and can take more responsibility for their learning.

One of their greatest needs is to have materials and instruction on their level. All too often, slow learners are given a basal that is below grade level but still above their reading level or a content-area textbook that is on grade level and well above their reading level. This situation is frustrating for a slow learner and leads to lowered self-concept and lowered achievement.

**Students with Language and Speech Disorders**

Speech impairments do not directly affect reading or writing. The teacher’s role consists primarily of being sensitive to the difficulty and helping the child apply skills in the classroom that she or he learned while working with a speech therapist. The teacher should also be supportive and help the child build confidence, providing opportunities for the child to take part in discussions and purposeful oral reading. Consultation with the speech therapist and “promotion of a classroom atmosphere conducive to unpressured verbal interaction” (Cartwright, Cartwright, & Ward, 1989, p. 174) are also recommended.
Although articulation difficulties do not necessarily impair the acquisition of reading and writing skills, other less noticeable language difficulties may pose significant problems. Some children’s language development follows a normal path but is slow. These children may experience a delay acquiring basic reading and writing skills.

Students who suffer from language disorders experience a disruption in the language development process (Hardman, Drew, Egan, & Wolf, 1993). The disruption may be expressive or receptive, or a combination of the two. Receptive language disorders affect students’ understanding of language. Expressive disorders hinder the ability to communicate. Students with an expressive disorder may possess information but have difficulty communicating it.

**Inclusion**

*Inclusion* means teaching students who have disabilities or special needs within the general education classroom. To accelerate the trend toward educating special education students within the regular classroom, the concept of *inclusion* has been widely adopted. Inclusion has come to mean providing support to classroom teachers as they, in turn, provide support for the education of disabled students. Supporting disabled students means creating and maintaining a warm, accepting atmosphere for all students and making whatever accommodations and modifications are required to develop their literacy abilities.

**Modifications** refers to altering the curriculum, changing the school attendance requirement, or making other changes in school policy designed to aid disabled students. **Accommodations** refer to changes in the way students are taught. These could include changes in instruction, assessment, or the assignment of homework (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 1998). Allowing a test to be taken orally, for instance, would be an accommodation. In making accommodations, it is best if the accommodations benefit all students. Providing a talking software program, such as Co: Writer (Don Johnston) or Doctor Peet’s Talk Writer (Interest-Driven Learning), would be an accommodation that would benefit all students.

**Gifted and Talented Students**

A reading and writing program for gifted and talented students should take into account the individual characteristics of the children. About 50 percent of the gifted come to school already reading (Terman, 1954). Provision should
be made for them and for those reading above grade level. For example, gifted second-graders reading on a fifth- or sixth-grade level should not be restricted to second-grade material. The materials they read should be on their instructional and interest levels. (See “Graded Listing of Outstanding Children’s Books” on MyEducationLab for challenging books.)

Because they master basic reading skills early and may not be sufficiently challenged by the classroom collections of books, gifted and talented students should learn how to select books from the school library. To enable them to investigate areas of special interest, provide early instruction in the use of dictionaries, encyclopedias, the Internet, and other basic references, as well as in the use of research skills.

Reading and writing workshops work quite well for the gifted. Through self-selected reading in reading workshop, gifted students are free to pursue advanced work at an accelerated pace. Through writing workshops, gifted students can also explore a broad range of writing genres. In creating reports on subjects of interest, they can investigate topics in depth and apply a host of practical research skills. Gifted students might also attempt some of the more difficult kinds of writing, such as poetry, drama, and short pieces of fiction.

One program that works exceptionally well with the gifted is Junior Great Books, a program in which students read literary classics and discuss them using a technique known as shared inquiry. The group leader, who is trained by the Great Books Foundation, initiates and guides the discussion, but it is up to the group to interpret the reading and validate its interpretation with evidence from the text. As Tierney and Readence (2005) note, “[s]hared inquiry offers discussion leaders a systematic approach for preparing for discussions” and “mobilizing student interactions.” It also “includes carefully developed guidelines by which group leaders might monitor the success of discussions and initiate strategies to improve them” (p. 401). (Junior Great Books also works well with average and struggling readers.)

Culturally Diverse Students

In working with children and parents from other cultures, you need to be metacognitive: You need to realize that you perceive your students and their parents through your own cultural lens (Maldonado-Colon, 2003) and that the lives of your students are different in some ways from yours. You need to study the culture of your students and find out as much as you can about your students’ everyday lives.

In developing teaching techniques that are appropriate for diverse learning styles, you have to be aware of the ways in which students think and process information. Teaching needs to be more collaborative. You have to ask children how they construct meaning so that you can gain insight into their thinking processes. You need to try varied approaches to teaching and organizing classes to learn which ones work best.
You also need to give students choices to determine the kinds of activities they prefer. Many suggestions for increasing the achievement of ethnic and linguistic minority children—such as cooperative learning and being sensitive to learning styles—should help all children learn better (Banks, 1994).

**Accepting the Student’s Language**

A student’s language is part of who she or he is. Rejecting it is interpreted as a personal rejection. Everyone speaks a dialect, which is determined by place of birth, socioeconomic status, and other factors. Some African American children speak a dialect known as Black English, which is very similar to standard English. The differences between the two dialects are minor and include features such as dropping the suffixes *-ing* and *-ed*, omitting the word *is* (“He busy”), and using some variations in pronunciation such as *pin* for *pen* (Shuy, 1973).

Dialect has no negative effect on reading achievement; it may, however, influence teacher attitude (Goodman & Goodman, 1978). Teachers who form unfavorable opinions on the basis of variant dialects can convey those feelings and associated lowered expectations to students. If they constantly correct language, teachers might also be hindering communication between themselves and their students.

Even when reading orally, a child who uses a variant dialect should not be corrected. In fact, translation of printed symbols into one’s dialect is a positive sign (Goodman & Goodman, 1978). It indicates that the student is reading for meaning and not just making sounds.

Teachers should use standard English, thus providing a model for children who speak a variant dialect. Although all dialects are equally acceptable, the use of standard English can be a factor in vocational success. Rather than correcting or eradicating a variant dialect, Brown (1988) recommended that standard English be presented as a second dialect that students may use if they wish. The New Standards Speaking and Listening Committee (2001b) suggests that students who have been in school a few years should be expected to use standard English for academic purposes but not necessarily in social situations. “All students should learn the shared rules of standard English—but not in ways that tread on their heritage” (p. 24).

**Implications of Diversity for Instruction**

The diversity present in today’s classrooms means that teachers need to be able to differentiate instruction. To do so, teachers should learn about the cognitive, cultural, literacy, and linguistic background of students and use that knowledge to plan instruction. The diversity that students bring to the classroom should be valued and built upon. To meet the needs of all students, teachers must apply the principles of RTI by monitoring the progress of each student and modifying and intensifying programs, supplying added help, or getting assistance if students fail to make progress.
Preparing all students to be college- and career-ready requires taking a long-term view of literacy. As literacy professionals, we need to ask ourselves, “What kind of program will result in literacy proficiency for almost all students?” The temptation is to drill students on the kinds of items they will be tested on. The drill-skill approach hasn’t worked in the past and won’t work now. It is too shallow. What is needed is an in-depth approach that builds students’ background knowledge and vocabulary, fosters language development, and develops the kinds of skills needed to cope with the literacy demands that students face now and will face in the future so that they are prepared to take their place in postsecondary education and the world of work.

Subsequent chapters will build on the background given in this chapter. They will provide specific suggestions for applying the concepts of RTI and differentiating and adapting instruction when working with diverse students. Insofar as possible, the suggestions made in this text are evidence-based. In some instances, however, they are based on personal experience or the experience of others. Teaching literacy is an art as well as a science.

**Summary**

Mandates to prepare every student to be college- and career-ready and RTI are designed to help the diverse populations found in U.S. schools, especially students at risk, to fully develop literacy skills. Growing out of IDEIA 2004 is response to intervention (RTI), which uses progress monitoring and intervention to help struggling students. RTI can also be used along with other measures in the identification of learning disabilities.

Students at risk include English language learners; students raised in poverty; and students who have physical, mental, or cognitive disabilities. Students at risk benefit from instruction that develops language, background, and literacy skills and that respects their native language and culture.

Increasingly, students with a range of learning and physical disabilities are being taught within the regular classroom. Working closely with special education and literacy resource personnel and other specialists, the classroom teacher should make adjustments in the physical environment and/or program so that these students learn to read and write to their full capacities. Gifted and talented students need to be given challenging material and programs.

**Extending and Applying**

1. Interview the special education, Title I, or remedial reading or intervention specialist at the school where you teach or at a nearby elementary school. Find out what kinds of programs the school offers for special education, Title I, and remedial students. Also find out whether RTI is being implemented in the school and, if so, how it is structured.

2. Observe a lesson in which English language learners are being taught. Note how the teacher
makes adaptations for the students. In particular, what does the teacher do to make input comprehensible? What is done to encourage output? Does the teacher intentionally present vocabulary or language structures?

3. Observe a classroom in which remedial or special education instruction is offered according to the inclusion model. What arrangements have the specialist and the classroom teacher made for working together? What are the advantages of this type of arrangement? What are some of the disadvantages?

4. Investigate the culture of a minority group that is represented in a class you are now teaching or observing. Find out information about the group’s literature, language, and customs. How might you use this information to plan more effective instruction for the class? Plan a lesson using this information. If possible, teach the lesson and evaluate its effectiveness.

Professional Reflection

Do I
___ have an understanding of the diverse populations served by today’s elementary schools?
___ have an understanding of the principles of RTI?
___ have an understanding of how I might adapt and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners?
___ have an understanding of the importance of believing that all students can learn?

Am I able to
___ differentiate instruction?
___ build on the culture and background that each student brings to literacy?

Reflection Question

What adaptations might you make for English language learners, even though you don’t speak their language? On what basis would you make these adaptations? What resources might you use?

Building Competencies

To build competencies, consult the following sources for more detailed information:
National Center on Response to Intervention www.rti4success.org
Has extensive information on RTI.
International Reading Association Response to Intervention http://reading.org/Resources/Resources-ByTopic/ResponseToIntervention/Overview.aspx
Views RTI from a literacy perspective.
Information, including video clips, on teaching ELLs
LD OnLine http://www.ldonline.org
Information on learning disabilities and ADHD.
Information about an exemplary approach to developing the literacy abilities of students living in poverty.