Evidence-based reading research, the essential components of reading instruction, and data-driven
decision making—these concepts represent the direction in which literacy professionals currently focus
attention. Fortunately, Reading and Learning to Read has always included philosophies, teaching strate-
gies, and assessment practices that reflect the beliefs that underscore these concepts.

In the ninth edition of Reading and Learning to Read, there is a focus on the Common Core State
Standards (CCSS) initiative. The CCSS are integrated throughout the text and each chapter features the
English Language Arts (ELA) standards respectively as they relate to the chapter content.

We continue to recognize legislative influences, standards for reading professionals, and research-
based practices, as well as update the reader with new strategies that reflect alternative reading method-
ologies that we consider to be best practices. Students’ voices on reading and learning to read also
support these practices. In addition, this edition reflects our dedication to struggling learners. We
highlight the essential components of effective literacy instruction (phonemic awareness, phono-
ic, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) and demonstrate how each component can be taught
within meaningful contexts. In addition, we highlight elements of managing and organizing effective
language arts classrooms.

The ninth edition continues to feature technology applications as they relate to literacy instruc-
tion, and also highlights new literacies. The concept of new literacies goes beyond linear print to include
knowledge of fluid print such as hypertext, graphic design, visual literacy, music, and film interpreta-
tion. We recognize that new literacies are transforming the way children comprehend and express their
understanding of the world.

Core Beliefs at the Center of This Text

This ninth edition of Reading and Learning to Read is based on research, legislation, and current think-
ing about how children become literate. We continue to use our core beliefs about literacy learning to
frame important questions related to the teaching of reading. In addition, we craft our beliefs to reflect
topics that address current educationally related literacy issues relevant to the twenty-first century. We
believe the following:

● Children use language to seek and construct meaning from what they experience, hear, view, and
  read.
● Reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing are interrelated and mutually supportive as chil-
  dren learn to become literate.
● Learning to read involves learning how to decode words quickly and accurately with comprehen-
  sion as the main goal of word recognition instruction.
● Children learn to read as they read to learn. They need to view reading as enjoyable, a process of
  communication, a process of gathering knowledge, a venue for expressing opinions, and so much
  more.
● Children need to be exposed to a broad spectrum of reading materials and text, including fiction,
  nonfiction, informational, electronic, and texts that reflect new literacies (art, music, dance, graph-
  ics, comics, etc.) in a well-managed and organized literate classroom.
Children develop skills and strategies through explicit instruction in purposeful, meaningful ways.

Assessment techniques and processes need to mirror the authentic ways children demonstrate their continually developing literacy, and assessments should inform instruction.

Children benefit from classroom communities in which materials, curricula, instruction, practice, and assessment recognize diversity.

Teachers, parents, and administrators should work together as they make decisions based on how children learn and how they can best be taught.

Changes to the Ninth Edition

The ninth edition of Reading and Learning to Read continues to emphasize a comprehensive approach to teaching reading and writing. In maintaining this standard of excellence, this edition includes a number of additions and updates that reflect the changes in the field of literacy. Each chapter opens with concept map and chapter objectives that are aligned with the major sections in the chapter, and the chapter summary. References throughout are updated. Other changes include:

- The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for the English Language Arts are aligned and integrated into each chapter to assist teachers with instructional and assessment decisions in order to help all children succeed.
- In the feature Step-by-Step Lessons there is more of a focus on teaching ELLs.
- Coverage of Response to Intervention (RTI) in schools and how school districts help struggling learners to develop effective skills for literacy instruction has been updated. The RTI for Struggling Readers boxes provide the integration of RTI and RTI decision making in relation to the topic of each chapter.
- Each chapter has been updated based on current research and topics. Classroom management and organization are essential components of an effective literate classroom. The authors have integrated information on creating and managing a literate environment throughout the text.
- The burgeoning concept of new literacies is explored in the general text and in the New Literacies features, which offer classroom strategies that broaden the understanding of literacy beyond print, including multimodal forms of graphic design, visual literacy, music, film, and even advertising.
- Teaching concepts and more specific information related to each chapter topic are highlighted at the end of the chapter in a new feature, Through the Lens of the Common Core.

In addition to these global changes, discussions have been enhanced and new topics have been introduced within each chapter edition to reflect the latest trends and research in literacy education. Chapter changes and additions include the following:

Chapter 1: Knowledge and Beliefs About Reading

Chapter 1 includes new technology information, such as web links related to the legislative influences in reading as well as information on new literacies in Box 1.3. Additionally, Richard Vacca gives his perspective of the Common Core State Standards in Box 1.2. New scenarios and updated information can be found throughout the chapter.

Chapter 2: Approaches to Reading Instruction

Chapter 2 features new sections on top-down curriculum, the literature-based approach, the basal reader approach, the integrated language arts approach, the technology-based approach, curriculum methods, and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Both a New Literacies and a Viewpoint Box have also been added as well as a new feature that explains the relationship between the CCSS and approaches to reading instruction. A section on what an effective teacher looks like was also added to conclude the chapter.
Chapter 3: Meeting the Literacy Needs of Diverse Learners

Chapter 3 includes new boxes and figures including Step-by-Step Lessons. Best practices for diverse learners include explicit references to the CCSS for the English Language Arts, including reading, writing, and speaking and listening.

Chapter 4: Early Literacy: From Birth to School

Chapter 4 has been reorganized with new sections on oral language development, talking to children, and using RTI with young children, which includes the latest information in this area and how the CCSS affect our youngest learners. The reading development section features significant revisions including a discussion of dramatic play. Several vignettes throughout the chapter are also new.

Chapter 5: Literacy Instruction for Beginning Readers and Writers

Chapter 5 begins with a look back at how young children were taught how to read, which is different from today’s philosophy. Also new to this chapter are: a section on using books to teach beginners how to read, which has a greater emphasis on nonfiction books and eBooks, and new strategies for teaching children necessary skills, including some with a multisensory approach. Teaching the CCSS is highlighted in this chapter with an emphasis on teaching all skills in authentic ways.

Chapter 6: Assessing Reading Performance

Chapter 6 changes focus more on the integration of technology and assessment than in past editions. New coverage includes discussions of students who are demonstrating new technological skills while reading print and nonprint materials and technology-based assessments such as digital portfolios and the Developmental Reading Assessment. New scenarios are also included throughout this chapter.

Chapter 7: Word Identification

Chapter 7 includes several new boxes that demonstrate Step-by-Step Lessons for teaching phonics. Multiple new references are noted regarding the CCSS for the English Language Arts.

Chapter 8: Reading Fluency

Chapter 8 is updated with some clarifying thoughts on the definition of fluency and on assessing fluency from leaders in this field. New sections on the uniqueness of English language learners and fluency as well as on how to use silent reading in the classroom to strategically support fluency have been added.

Chapter 9: Vocabulary Knowledge and Concept Development

Chapter 9 has been updated with new scenarios throughout the chapter. There is an increased focus on English language learners in order to enhance our discussion of vocabulary development. There is also a closer look at how to better integrate technology into vocabulary instruction.

Chapter 10: Reading Comprehension

Chapter 10 is reconfigured to capture the concepts of understanding stories, followed by strategies for understanding content-related text. There is also a new section on technology and twenty-first century reading comprehension skills.

Chapter 11: Reading–Writing Connections

Chapter 11 features a revised section on technology that discusses electronic text production and publishing, online communications, and online resources for writing. Along with the integration of the CCSS, five new boxes and two new figures capture new guidelines for research-based practices and provide practical examples of classroom-based writing strategies.
Chapter 12: Bringing Children and Text Together

Chapter 12 starts with a new title. The focus of the chapter was expanded to include the utilization of literature and informational text as it relates to the CCSS. An increased integration of technology as well as a new section on media literacy is included. Critical literacy is explained and defined in the chapter.

Chapter 13: Instructional Materials

Chapter 13 has a new section about the history of basal readers and then describes contemporary basals of today (CCSS, all types of assessments, etc.). The language of the basal, as well as a new section called “Anatomy of Basal Readers,” which includes the features and components of basals today, is integrated throughout the chapter. A Before/During/After framework is has also included. Finally, a completely new section on technology as an instructional tool is included.

Chapter 14: Making the Transition to Content Area Texts

Chapter 14 includes five new features boxes that include Research-Based Practices and Step-by-Step Lessons. Over three dozen new references document up-to-date topics and issues regarding content area reading, and a new section on digital literacy has been added.

Features of the Ninth Edition

With superior coverage of standards and an emphasis on comprehensive reading instruction, Reading and Learning to Read, Ninth Edition, remains an active learning tool that encourages future teachers to teach reading in ways that are both meaningful and reflective. Notable features of Reading and Learning to Read include the following:

- **The Activating Your Schema** at the beginning of each chapter acts as an advance organizer for critical thinking and reflective reading, providing schema-related questions that encourage readers to think about their own experiences in terms of their futures as reading and writing teachers.

- **A focus on standards** can be found throughout every chapter starting with the Common Core State Standards and IRA standards that are listed at the beginning of each chapter. Meeting standards—state, local, and those developed by professional organizations—plays a major role in helping teachers meet the challenge of accountability for student performance on standards-based tests.

- **Key Terms** are linked to the glossary so that when students click on a key term, they will be taken to the definition for that term.
Actually "memory reading" play a crucial role in the child's understanding that print is 
rereading of favorite stories, songs, poems, and rhymes. Shared reading is a way of cre-
ating opportunities for children to learn what a book is, what an "expert" reader does 
with a book as it is read, and what makes a story a story. Box 4.7 outlines the steps of 
shared reading.

**Box 4.7 Shared Reading**

**Reread Familiar Stories**

**Introduce, Talk About, and Read**

- Consider the following steps when sharing books with early 
  children:
  1. Once the children have become familiar with several 
     stories, invite conversation: "What did you enjoy 
     about the story?" "Were the characters like you?" It is 
     important to use child-friendly language.
  2. Tell children the title of the story. Invite further predic-
     tions as to the story's content.
  3. Look at the cover of the story and ask questions such as:
     "What does the illustration on the cover remind you of?" "What do you think this 
     back cover, title and author page, pictures to support 
     meaning and enjoyment.
  4. Make children aware of the book conventions 
     (e.g., recognizing letter–sound relationships in words, 
     confirming the right direction of the text, using context to identify words, building a sight-word 
     vocabulary, and understanding book structure by asking questions such as: "What is the story 
     about?"

**Encourage Independent Reading**

- As children progress in the sharing and rereading of 
  familiar stories, teach them literacy skills and strategies 
  for decoding and encoding words. In this way, children 
  become more independent readers.
- As children read many times, they are more likely to 
  develop a love for reading. Shared reading helps them 
  become familiar with the conventions of reading.

**Develop Reading Skills and Strategies**

- As children progress in the sharing and rereading of 
  familiar stories, teach them literacy skills and strategies 
  for decoding and encoding words. In this way, children 
  become more independent readers.
- As children read many times, they are more likely to 
  develop a love for reading. Shared reading helps them 
  become familiar with the conventions of reading.
Preface

Word Identification Involves More than Teaching Phonics

Box 7.1 Viewpoint

Word Identification Involves More than Teaching Phonics

Step-by-Step Lesson boxes offer teacher-directed lessons that can be imported directly into the classroom as specific lessons or as a series of lessons.

New Literacies boxes focus on how teachers can use technology to enhance literacy instruction. Readers will learn about using podcasts, wikis, and other software tools and programs that can make teaching and learning literacy skills motivating and engaging.

Viewpoint boxes introduce the reader to the research and opinions of respected teacher-educators, researchers, and authors about particular facets of reading instruction.
An emphasis on diverse learners and struggling readers reflects current realities and concerns in today's schools. This emphasis includes a RTI for Struggling Readers section at the end of each chapter, highlighting the influence of response to intervention on national and statewide literacy decisions.

Chapter-ending sections such as the Summary help students review, formulate, and extend their thinking about the concepts discussed in each chapter. In particular, the projects in Teacher Action Research challenge the reader to think critically about the information covered.


Reading and Learning to Read (Ninth Edition) is available for the first time as a Pearson eText. The affordable, convenient, interactive version of this text includes tools to help navigate and understand important, current content. The Pearson eText is available with a black and white, loose-leaf printed version of the text.

Features of the Pearson eText include:

- **Tools:** Available tools allow you to take and share notes, highlight and bookmark chapter concepts, and search by keyword.
- **Accessibility:** eTexts are accessible from your computer, as well as iPad and Android tablets with the Pearson eText app.
- **Affordability:** eText formats are less expensive, in comparison to a traditional text book.
- **Upgrades:** Extended access upgrades are available.
- **Videos:** An interactive eText feature in every chapter, these videos offer a glimpse of the real world of teaching. View interviews of experts and footage of teachers and administrators discussing and applying chapter concepts.
- **End of chapter Assessments:** Each chapter includes questions that test students’ knowledge of the content they have just read throughout the chapter. Feedback is provided to help students identify their progress toward meeting learning outcomes.
- **Glossary:** Key terms are linked to the eText glossary offering students an opportunity to clarify any term while they are reading, without skipping concepts they do not understand.
- **Embedded weblinks:** Throughout the chapters, these weblinks encourage further exploration of chapter topics. Whether exploring organizations, institutions, government resources, or sites that provide links to teaching tools or products, students will find a wealth of information.
- **Straight from the Classroom features:** Several of the chapters include these pop-up feature boxes, which provide authentic anecdotes and classroom-tested strategies from real teachers.

Enjoy the advantages of an eText, plus the benefits of print, all for less than the price of a traditional book! To learn more about the enhanced Pearson eText, go to www.pearsonhighered.com.

**Support Materials for Instructors**

The following resources are available for instructors to download on www.pearsonhighered.com/educators. Instructors enter the author or title of this book, select this particular edition of the book, and then click on the “Resources” tab to log in and download textbook supplements.

**Instructor’s Resource Manual and Test Bank (0133569748)**

The Instructor’s Resource Manual and Test Bank includes key topics for a robust variety of questions, activities an critical thinking reflective questions on topics such as the role of new technologies in the classroom, working with diverse learners, teaching middle school students, and teaching struggling readers. The test bank offers a large assortment of questions. Some items (lower-level questions) simply ask students to identify or explain concepts and principles they have learned. But many others (higher-level questions) ask students to apply those same concepts and principles to specific classroom situations—that is, to actual student behaviors and teaching strategies.

**PowerPoint Slides (0133571025)**

The PowerPoint slides include key concept summarizations, to enhance learning. They are designed to help students understand, organize, and remember core concepts, skills, and strategies.
TestGen (0133571092)

TestGen is a powerful test generator available exclusively from Pearson Education publishers. You install TestGen on your personal computer (Windows or Macintosh) and create your own tests for classroom testing and for other specialized delivery options, such as over a local area network or on the web. A test bank, which is also called a Test Item File (TIF), typically contains a large set of test items, organized by chapter and ready for your use in creating a test, based on the associated textbook material. Assessments—including equations, graphs, and scientific notation—may be created for both print or testing online.

The tests can be downloaded in the following formats:

- TestGen Testbank file—PC
- TestGen Testbank file—MAC
- TestGen Testbank—Blackboard 9 TIF
- TestGen Testbank—Blackboard CE/Vista (WebCT) TIF
- Angel Test Bank (zip)
- D2L Test Bank (zip)
- Moodle Test Bank
- Sakai Test Bank (zip)

Acknowledgments

This edition has evolved not only from the new information in the field of literacy, but also from the thoughtful response of our reviewers. We thank Jane Dewailly, Arkansas State University; Levenia Maxwell-Barnes, Delta State University; and Beth R. Walizer, Fort Hays State University. Throughout the revision process, each of us returned to their comments and feedback many times to focus our writing.

We also thank the teachers and colleagues who contributed to this ninth edition: William Kist of Kent State University; Peggy Zufall from Alliance City Schools; Laura Schmidt of Plain Local Schools; and Peter Schneller and Mandy Capel from the University of Mount Union.

In addition, we thank all of the professionals at Pearson who have guided us through the process of writing this ninth edition of Reading and Learning to Read. Genuine thanks to Editor Kathryn Boice, Developmental Editor Max Chuck, Project Manager Cynthia DeRocco, Executive Marketing Manager Krista Clark, Manufacturing Buyer Linda Sager, and Cover Administrator Diane Lorenzo. We would also like to thank the team at Electronic Publishing Services Inc. for helping march this book through production. Thank you for all of your support.

And, of course, we would like to thank our families for their loving support as we researched, crafted, and developed major changes in this ninth edition. Their patience with us has indeed made the process a family affair. Thank you to our husbands—Bob, John, and Matt.

Finally, we want to thank Jo Anne and Rich Vacca for the opportunity to continue the professional challenge of crafting this new edition of Reading and Learning to Read. Their initial invitation to write has motivated us to continue to develop literacy collaboratives, research-based inquiry, and a friendship that is priceless. Thank you, Jo Anne and Rich!

L. C. B.
L. A. L.
C. A. M.
In This Chapter, You Will Discover How to

- Analyze how beliefs about literacy learning influence instructional decisions and practices.
- Explain how teachers use and construct personal, practical, and professional knowledge about literacy learning.
- Define language, social, and psychological perspectives on reading and explain how they inform knowledge and beliefs about literacy learning.
- Compare the different theoretical models of the reading process that describe what humans do when they engage in reading.
Activating Your Schema

Think about a teacher who had a positive influence on your reading development. What instructional reading strategies and materials did he or she use? Think about a teacher who did not have a positive impact on your reading development. What instructional strategies and materials did he or she use?

Think about your reading experiences outside of the classroom. Focus on your home, family, and social experiences. How did these experiences influence your development as a reader?

2010 IRA Standards Found in This Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1</th>
<th>2.1</th>
<th>3.3</th>
<th>4.3</th>
<th>6.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Terms

- alphabetic principle
- autobiographical narrative
- belief system
- best practice
- bottom-up model
- constructivism
- decoding
- explicit
- graphophonemic cues
- implicit
- interactive model
- literacy coach
- literacy event
- metacognition
- new literacies
- orthographic knowledge
- professional knowledge
- psycholinguistics
- schemata
- semantic cues
- sociolinguistics
- syntactic cues
- top-down model
During the beginning of each school year, Mrs. Zufall has the challenge of trying to encourage the children in her first-grade class to believe that they are readers and writers. Depending on the children’s experiences and their developmental levels, some believe it easier than others. Some students like Maura read and write with ease while Destanie finds that reading and writing are difficult tasks. Because of these differences, it is critical for Mrs. Zufall to create an environment that encourages all children to develop their confidence as beginning readers and writers.

Providing a literate environment where the children feel comfortable to read and write helps them to develop as readers and writers. Having multiple books in the classroom, using various writing materials, and providing uninterrupted time all help to develop a community of readers and writers. A writing activity that Mrs. Zufall likes to encourage regularly is letter writing. This activity encourages the children to freewrite and practice their writing skills.

One day after lunch Destanie asks Mrs. Zufall, “Can I write a letter to you? I like to write letters.” Mrs. Zufall tells Destanie that it is a good idea. Maura overhears Destanie and requests permission to write a letter to her mom. “Certainly,” Mrs. Zufall responds and then asks the other children whether they want to write letters too. The class responds with a resounding, “Yes, can we?” Mrs. Zufall decides to delay the spelling lesson until later in the day because there is an excitement for letter writing. She tells the students to think about how to write a letter, the other letters they have written, and to whom they would like to write. The first graders excitedly write their special letters.

The letters have a great deal to say about “literacy in the making.” As innocent as it may seem on the surface, this activity reveals much about the children’s literacy development. Just ask yourself, for example, “Do Maura, Destanie, and the others know what writing and reading are for? Do they get their message across effectively? Do they have a sense of being a reader?” And as language users, “Are Maura, Destanie, and the others empowered? Are they willing to take risks?” The answers to questions such as these are as revealing about Mrs. Zufall’s first graders’ literacy development as the grammatical and spelling errors they made.

Although Maura and Destanie misspelled words, their written approximations of when, work, and favorite are phonetically regular and close to the conventional spellings of the words. Though Maura neglected to use proper punctuation at the end of one sentence, Mrs. Zufall attributes the omission to fast writing rather than a lack of understanding the use of punctuation. Developmentally, Maura and Destanie write the way they talk. In time, they’ll understand why it is important to use proper spelling and be grammatically appropriate.

After Mrs. Zufall collects all of the letters, she reads to the class The Jolly Postman by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. She builds anticipation for the story by inviting the students to think about the letters they have written and received. This book helps to demonstrate to the children that there are
various kinds of letters and different purposes. Mrs. Zufall reinforces that letter writing is purposeful and conveys meaning.

Throughout the year, Mrs. Zufall’s literacy program has centered on the development of confident and competent readers and writers. She continues to encourage her students to read and write and connect learning with literature. She wants her students to be motivated, thoughtful, and skillful as they engage in literacy learning. Although the school year is rapidly coming to a close, Mrs. Zufall thinks about the children’s first few days in her class. She recalls students who hardly spoke and wrote a word. Yet today, they have blossomed into confident and competent readers and writers. Her decision to continue and extend the communication reflects not only what she knows about reading and learning to read but also what she believes about teaching, learning, and the process of becoming literate.

How teachers come to know and develop beliefs about reading and learning to read is the subject of this chapter. Examine the chapter overview. It depicts the connections between several key concepts related to the role of teacher knowledge and beliefs in reading instruction. A belief system represents a teacher’s informed philosophy of reading and learning to read. What teachers believe about reading and learning to read is closely related to what they know about literacy learning and the teaching of literacy. As you study this chapter, pay close attention to how teachers come to know about literacy learning through (1) personal experiences—past and present—as readers and writers, (2) practical experiences and knowledge of their craft as they work with and learn from students, and (3) professional study that allows them to develop and extend their knowledge base about teaching and learning literacy.

Also in this chapter, we emphasize how different perspectives related to reading and learning inform teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about literacy learning. Language, social, and psychological perspectives are not mutually exclusive domains of knowledge. Often, effective literacy practice, sometimes referred to as best practice, requires teachers to use multiple perspectives as they plan and enact literacy instruction in their diverse, multidimensional classrooms. The final section of this chapter describes various theoretical models of the reading process. Understanding reading and learning to read within the context of theoretical models will enable you to connect knowledge and beliefs about reading to issues and approaches related to instructional practice.

The main goal of reading instruction is teaching children to become independent readers and learners.
Annie Pickert Fuller/Pearson Education

The Importance of Belief Systems

Knowledge and beliefs about reading and learning to read are wedded in ways that influence almost every aspect of a teacher’s instructional decisions and practices. To illustrate, consider what Mrs. Zufall does to help her students develop into confident readers and writers. Creating a literate environment where children feel comfortable to
read and write and making connections with literature are essential. In addition, sharing the book with the class results in a “commercial” for another book, Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *The Jolly Christmas Postman*, which is part of the classroom library collection. Sharing literature encourages the children to read and write, which are integral parts of the literacy curriculum in this first-grade classroom.

All of the reading and writing activities that evolved from the unanticipated events of the morning provided children with a demonstration of the *intertextuality* of stories. Stories are products of the imagination, but the problems and themes they portray reflect the human experience. *Intertextuality* is a word used by literary theorists to describe the connections that exist within and between texts. Think about the personal connections made by Maura, Destanie, and their classmates. The children in Mrs. Zufall’s class are exploring what it means to be *meaning seekers* and *meaning makers*. Their use of texts to construct meaning is the nexus by which they link the stories and explore a theme that will recur throughout their lives. They are developing a critical literary stance.

The work of teachers sometimes takes unexpected twists and turns—“teachable moments,” if you will, that usually beget reasons for reading and writing. Yet taking advantage of a teachable moment, as Mrs. Zufall did, requires a philosophy of reading and learning to read. Some educators call a teacher’s philosophical stance a *worldview*; others call it a *belief system*. For one reason or another, some teachers would probably have reacted differently to the children's letters. Perhaps another teacher would have praised Maura and Destanie for their efforts in writing the letters but, rather than extend the *literacy event*, would have concentrated on the misspellings or punctuation error. Another teacher might have been too busy or preoccupied with other matters to respond to Destanie's request in a manner that connects literacy learning to life in the classroom. Other teachers might simply have been oblivious to the teachable moment because they did not understand or appreciate the literacy event that occurred. Our point, therefore, is that a teacher’s knowledge and beliefs about the nature and purposes of reading and the ways in which it should be taught contribute significantly to whatever decisions a teacher makes in a given situation.

**Different Beliefs, Different Instructional Decisions**

Just about every teacher we’ve ever talked to agrees on the main goal of reading instruction: to teach children to become independent readers and learners. Differences among teachers, however, often reflect varying beliefs and instructional perspectives on how to help children achieve independence. Because they view the reading process through different belief systems, teachers have different instructional concerns and emphases. The decisions they make will also vary based on research and societal influences.

In addition, effective reading teachers use their knowledge and beliefs about reading to adapt instruction to individual differences among children in their classrooms. The students they work with may have different academic, language, cultural, or physical needs. Student diversity in today’s classrooms is greater today than at any time in this century. There is an increasing number of students whose first language is not English and whose culture does not reflect the beliefs, values, and standards of the mainstream culture in U.S. society. Moreover, inclusive classrooms, where students with “special needs” are included in regular classrooms, make it necessary that teachers become knowledgeable about the nature and purposes of reading acquisition.

No two teachers, even if they work with students at the same grade level and in classrooms next door to each other, teach reading in exactly the same way. Even though they may share the same instructional goals and adhere to literacy guidelines established within the school district or state department of education standards, teachers often make
Chapter 1  Knowledge and Beliefs About Reading

In Box 1.1, Meghan, a high school student, reflects upon her experiences of learning to read. She recounts both positive and negative reading experiences, suggests characteristics of an effective reading teacher, and describes her beliefs on why teachers teach differently.

Observe how Arch and Latisha, two first-grade teachers, introduce beginners to reading and learning to read. Arch invites his first graders to explore and experience the uses of oral and written language in a variety of instructional situations. He chooses all kinds of authentic and functional reading material—“anything that’s real and important to the kids”—for reading and learning to read: signs, box tops, labels, poems, nursery rhymes, children’s books, interactive stories, and computer games. His students also create their own texts, and these become the basis for reading. They write in journals about what they read, make books from original stories that they share with one another, and dictate stories that Arch captures on chart paper. In addition, Arch uses “big books” and storybooks to build concepts and skills related to reading. Often he begins a big-book lesson by reading the story aloud and discussing it with the class. Over the course of several days, he rereads the story in unison with the children once, twice, or even more times and then invites individual students to read parts of the story on their own.

Arch pays some attention to letter–sound relationships in the context of the writing and reading activities that children engage in. He encourages students to invent spellings during journal writing and other writing activities by helping them “spell the words the way they sound.” In doing so, he responds individually to children’s invented spellings. For words that he thinks a child should know how to spell correctly, he provides explicit intervention. For others, he accepts the child’s invention if it approximates the conventional spelling. In addition, during big-book readings, Arch will periodically stop to point out and discuss initial letters and sounds, letter combinations, or endings. When students read aloud, Arch places little importance on word-perfect reading. He says, “I tell my kids not to let one or two words prevent them from reading; they might be able to understand what the story is about and to enjoy it without identifying all of the words.”

Latisha also teaches reading to 6-year-olds. But her approach is different from Arch’s. She believes quite strongly that beginning readers must start with letter–sound decisions and engage in practices based on what they know and believe to be worthwhile. In Box 1.1, Meghan, a high school student, reflects upon her experiences of learning to read. She recounts both positive and negative reading experiences, suggests characteristics of an effective reading teacher, and describes her beliefs on why teachers teach differently.

Meghan considers herself a good student and especially likes math. Overall she enjoys school but she believes, “It would be better if classes weren’t so boring.” As a high school student, Meghan has had many reading experiences and can identify characteristics that reading teachers exhibit which make them effective. Meghan believes “good teachers”:

- Are caring and helpful
- Know what they are talking about
- Are professional
- Teach rather than assign
- Provide a variety of interactive, instructional activities
- Explain things well

She further explains that she has had “good” and “poor” reading teachers. Meghan believes that teachers teach differently because, “Everyone has different personalities, backgrounds, cultural familiarity, college experiences, and everyday living occurrences.” Meghan’s experiences and insights reflect how teachers exhibit different beliefs that influence instructional decisions. Students are affected by teachers’ instructional styles in positive and negative ways. Consequently, it is important for teachers to be aware of their beliefs and understand how their instructional decisions affect students.
correspondences, translating print into speech. Other than occasional “experience charts” in the first weeks of the school year, Latisha doesn’t attempt to introduce writing until most of her children make the monumental “click” between the black squiggly marks on a page (print) and the sounds they represent (speech).

Of the “click,” Latisha says, “You can’t miss it.” When she sees children making the connection between print and speech, Latisha begins to aim for mastery.

The study of words in Latisha’s class centers around story selections from the basal reading program that her school adopted several years ago. The basal program provides Latisha with “great literature, big books, everything that you need to teach reading.” When she began teaching 15 years ago, Latisha taught letter–sound relationships by relying heavily on workbooks and worksheets from the basal program. Her students spent a lot of time on isolated drill and rote memorization of phonics rules. “I didn’t know better then. Using workbook exercises was accepted practice by the teachers in my building, and I thought I was doing the right thing.”

Today, however, Latisha bases much of what she does on research related to how children learn words. Each day she blocks out 15 to 20 minutes for word study. She still teaches letter–sound relationships in a direct and systematic manner but relies more on explicit instruction. That is, Latisha makes it a practice to model skills and strategies that children need to decipher unknown words, explain why it is important for students to learn the skill or strategy under study, and guide students in their acquisition of the skill or strategy. She makes sure, for example, at the beginning of the school year that her students have rudimentary skills related to hearing sounds in words, recognizing letters and sounds, and blending sounds into words. Latisha uses story selections from the basal reading anthology and big books to identify words for study and to provide practice and application in the use of the skill or strategy. Rather than dispense worksheets that require students to circle letters or draw lines to pictures, Latisha says, “I do a lot more teaching about phonics skills and strategies so that it makes sense to students as they learn to decode words.”

The perspectives from which Latisha and Arch teach reading reflect different beliefs about learning to read that result in different instructional emphases and practices. Arch uses authentic, real-world literature such as children’s books and functional materials such as signs and box tops. Latisha relies on materials from a basal reading program that includes literature anthologies and a wide range of ancillary materials. Latisha begins instruction with an emphasis on phonics skills and strategies. Arch begins with immersion in reading and writing. Comprehension is as important to Latisha as it is to Arch, but the two differ in belief. Latisha’s understanding of reading suggests that when children decode words accurately and quickly, they are in a better position to comprehend what they read than children who are not accurate and automatic decoders. Arch’s view is that children who engage in authentic literacy experiences will search for meaning in everything they read and write.

**Reading Instruction and Teachers’ Belief Systems**

Latisha’s style of teaching reading reflects beliefs that employ a systematic instructional approach. A systematic instructional approach includes direct teaching and a logical instructional sequence. This structure includes ample opportunities to practice specific skills and move along a defined trajectory related to the sequencing of skills. Arch’s methods are the product of a belief system that reflects a broader constructivist view. This model is focused on the needs of the individual child. In this perspective, the role of the teacher is a facilitator who helps the child negotiate text by addressing the most immediate instructional needs. The progression of instruction or sequencing of skills is often centered around the student’s individual progress. Language skills are practiced through application or embedded skills instruction.
In examining these two approaches to reading, it is clear that the implementation of reading instruction can be viewed from multiple perspectives. This ambiguity is further complicated as we look at the current movement at the national level that emphasizes teaching methods, curriculum standards and demands that educators be accountable for result.

In April 1997, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in consultation with the secretary of education, was charged to convene a National Reading Panel (NRP) that would assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. The panel was asked to provide a summary of findings that included the application of this work to classroom-based instruction. The NRP built on the previous work of the National Research Council (NRC) published in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In April 2000, the panel released its findings and made recommendations about teaching methods that are scientifically proven to increase student learning and achievement. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 includes the scientifically based reading instruction recommendations for preschool and primary grades.

Scientifically based reading research, as defined in the federal legislation, is the body of scientific evidence about reading methodologies drawn from experimental and quasi-experimental work. These studies include rigorous data analysis and measurements that provide valid data across observers and evaluators. The research must be accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or be approved by an independent panel of experts.

With the reauthorization of ESEA in 2001, the federal government set forward initiatives in an attempt to ensure that no child is left behind. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires districts to assess all subjects to determine the success of all students based on assessment results. This legislation challenges educators to use evidence-based research as a guide in the development of high-quality reading programs for students in preschool and the primary grades. Programs such as Reading First and Early Reading First clearly define the parameters and expected outcomes for educators and charge teachers to examine their teaching practices, tools, and materials. Reading First was established to improve K–3 reading achievement with the focus on explicitly teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Early Reading First focused on literacy development of preschoolers while also utilizing scientifically based reading research teaching approaches. These programs challenge reading teachers to rethink what it means to “teach and learn.”

Continuing dialogue related to these current trends has resulted in recommendations from high-level reading organizations. The International Reading Association (IRA) raises questions about the notion of scientific research and calls for a broader perspective. This point of view stresses that “[n]o single study ever establishes a program or practice as effective; moreover, it is the convergence of evidence from a variety of study designs that is ultimately scientifically convincing” (International Reading Association, 2002b, p. 1). The International Reading Association supports evidence-based reading instruction as the way to enhance literacy development.

In light of the various positions on reading research, teachers need to be aware of programs and practices based on multiple types of research studies with a broad scope of topics reviewed. Research provides the reading professional a foundation for effective reading instruction. It should broaden reading professionals’ beliefs, not narrow them. There are more and more external mandates and legislative decisions regarding reading. A few legislative influences on literacy include Race to the Top programs, Striving Readers, and the LEARN Act. These are briefly described in Figure 1.1.

The Common Core State Standard (CCSS) initiative set out to develop high-quality education standards in order to ensure that all students are college and career ready. With the focus on the CCSS established by National Governors Association and the Council
of Chief State School Officers (2010), there are state-led curricular expectations developed for content areas. The CCSS are rigorous research-based standards in reading, writing, listening, speaking, as well as mathematics. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS-ELA) have created significant changes in literacy practices. There are grade-specific standards requiring students to read more challenging texts—both narrative and informational—in order to help them reach more advanced literacy achievement levels (International Reading Association, 2012). CCSS-ELA standards include knowledge and skills in the domains of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language, as well as the integration of the language arts across content subject areas in order to develop college- and career-readiness skills and strategies.

Students need to be prepared for college and career with a different set of skills than in the past. Developing higher-order thinking skills that require students to think critically is the focus of the standards. In order to develop these skills teaching needs to be more personalized, relevant, applicable, and collaborative. Teachers are more empowered to utilize a variety of pedagogical strategies, digital tools, and resources to meet individual students’ needs. Teachers are working more collaboratively with students to include them in the learning process. Additionally, data are utilized to set standard-based learning goals as well as instructional and assessment procedures.

Balancing literature and informational texts, building knowledge in content areas, using complex texts, relying upon evidence in text, developing academic vocabulary, fostering complex thinking skills, and relying upon a technological emphasis all have changed the literacy landscape. Teachers need to make decisions to develop reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills while they also cover the nonnegotiables in the area of teaching reading.

With today’s views of reading content and reading instruction, teachers now more than ever need to make informed decisions based on their beliefs of reading and learning to read. Richard Vacca (see Box 1.2) emphasizes that decisions will need to be
The Common Core State Standards: Let the Challenge Begin  Richard T. Vacca

Richard T. Vacca is past president of the International Reading Association, a member of the Reading Hall of Fame, and the author of many books and articles on reading instruction.

Teaching children to read has always been a challenge, even for the most skilled and experienced classroom teachers. After all, reading is a covert and complex human process that takes place in the head and heart of the reader. Who really knows what happens within a child (or adult) who picks up a book or goes online to engage in the very human activity that we call reading? The best that teachers can do is to involve learners in reading and learning to read through the use of instructional practices and strategies based on the best evidence from research and inquiry.

A standards-based curriculum is an important dynamic in the reading and learning to read journey that all students travel from the first day that they step into a kindergarten classroom. Why a standards-based curriculum? Standards define what students should learn and how they should learn it at designated grade levels. Since the mid-1990s, state-based standards have provided a road map to what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, not only for English Language Arts, but for other content areas as well. The underlying rationale for a standards-based curriculum is that high learning expectations—clearly stated and specific in nature—will lead to noticeable increases in student achievement. With high learning expectations comes an accountability system based on “high-stakes” testing to determine how well students meet the standards formulated in each content area. Most states tie high-stakes assessment to the threat of grade-level retention for students who perform below predetermined levels of proficiency in critical areas such as reading. Unfortunately, in some classrooms a proficient level of performance on high-stakes assessment becomes “the be-all and end-all” of classroom instruction.

The United States, unlike most countries, does not have a set of national education standards. Individual states have sole responsibility for determining what teachers should teach and students should learn. However, in 2010 the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers released the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for literacy and mathematics. According to the CCSS Mission Statement (2010):

The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy. (p.11)

Frequently referred to as “the Common Core,” CCSS have been adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia at the time of this writing. The Common Core is the closest the United States has come as a country to adopting a national curriculum. From a teaching perspective, one of the real benefits of having states use the same core standards is the strong possibility for broad-based sharing of what works in the classroom and what doesn’t. Because the Common Core does not come with rigid guidelines concerning implementation, it provides local school flexibility to decide how to best implement the standards at various grade levels. And therein lies the challenge—and the hope that the Common Core will make a real difference in the literacy learning of children and adolescents in today’s schools.

From the very onset of schooling, the Common Core recognizes that learning to read and reading to learn are two sides of the same “literacy coin.” From kindergarten onward, there is greater emphasis than ever before on the use of informational texts in the classroom. Gone forever is that false dichotomy that has plagued literacy instruction for years: in grades K–3, children learn to read and in grades 4 and beyond, they read to learn. The real potential of the Common Core is that it positions students to become more active in their use of literacy skills: to better understand what they are reading about, writing about, talking about in classroom discussion, or viewing on a computer screen or video monitor.

Weaving literacy into the fabric of content area learning— for beginners as well as those who are developing in their abilities—is one of the looming challenges that will be faced by all teachers. Reading, writing, talking, and viewing are tools that students use to learn. Who is in a better, more strategic position to show students how to learn with all kinds of texts at a particular grade level than the teacher who guides what students are expected to learn and how they are to learn it? Are the Common Core standards the panacea for solving all of the literacy problems that teachers, parents, administrators, policy makers, and politicians have been praying for? Hardly! Yet the Common Core gives schools an opportunity to make decisions
made for instructional approaches and strategies as well as materials. Teachers—not programs or mandates—produce effective reading instruction and achievement. It is ultimately the teacher who is responsible for providing successful reading experiences.

This is also true when integrating **new literacies**. Although difficult to define due to various interpretations of what constitutes “new” literacies in the context of changing textual media, the definition that best represents the viewpoint of this text is that of Bean and Harper (2011), who suggest that “new literacies” are the literacies, practices, and competencies needed to use and adapt to constantly changing information and communication technologies. Being able to use, locate, and evaluate information from a web page; participate in an online discussion; listen to a podcast; and develop a video production are a few examples of new information and communication technologies that require students to be critical, active readers. Readers need a wide range of reading abilities in the twenty-first-century classroom (Tate, 2011). They rely on their foundational literacies to develop the skills and strategies needed to be critical readers (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008). New literacies provide opportunities for developing literacy skills as well as encouraging students to work together.

The integration of technologically based reading and writing instruction is an important component in today’s classrooms. The extent of developing new literacies in the classroom is dependent on teachers’ belief systems and relies on their professional expertise and their evaluation of current technology to successfully integrate technology in their classrooms. Teachers need to think about how they will develop foundational and critical literacy skills so their students can successfully read print and nonprint materials. William Kist provides further insights on new literacies and reading instruction in Box 1.3.

Why isn’t there more consensus on how to teach children to read? Although it is perfectly natural to want to know the “right way” to do something, a comprehensive reading program—using several methods instead of just one approach—gives teachers the freedom to use their own professional expertise and judgment. The danger of buying into the “right way” to teach reading is that teachers can become dependent on others telling them how to help students develop as readers. If teachers are to be empowered as professionals, they must apply their knowledge and beliefs about reading and learning to read in deciding what practices are best for their students and in order to help them be college and career ready.

In the pressured world of teaching, it is sometimes easy to lose sight of what we know and believe about children, reading, and how children learn to read. The common thread that runs through the literacy practices of Mrs. Zufall, Arch, Latisha, and countless other reading professionals is that they view reading and learning to read through belief systems that define and shape their roles as classroom teachers. Through what set of beliefs do you view reading and learning to read? How do you believe reading and writing should be taught in an effective literacy program? Throughout your teaching career, from the time you begin studying to become a teacher and all the while you practice your craft, you will be continually developing answers to these questions as you build and refine your knowledge and beliefs about what counts as literacy learning in your classroom.
Chapter 1

Knowledge and Beliefs About Reading

Box 1.3 New Literacies

Dr. William Kist on New Literacies

Dr. William Kist, associate professor of education at Kent State University and author of The Socially Networked Classroom, shares his perspectives on the concept of “new literacies” in schools.

What does the term “new literacies” mean?
The term new literacies is just one of several terms that have been used by literacy educators to talk about the rapidly changing nature of “reading” and “writing.” One of my favorite definitions is by Elliot Eisner.

In order to be read, a poem, an equation, a painting, a dance, a novel, or a contract each requires a distinctive form of literacy, when literacy means, as I intend it to mean, a way of conveying meaning through and recovering meaning from the form of representation in which it appears. (Eisner, 1997, p. 353)

People who refer to “new literacies” or “multiliteracies,” or “multimodal literacy,” or “media literacy” or “information and communication technology (ICT)” or “digital literacies” are generally talking about a broadened conception of literacy that still, of course, includes words, but also includes a knowledge of graphic design, visual literacy, and even music and film literacies as well as advertising. All of these “new” forms of representation are a part of reading and writing via online.

Reading/language arts teachers have historically been focused on words and page-based literacy exclusively. The new ways we read and write today are pushing us to help our students be better readers and writers not only of words but of other forms of representation as well.

What do students of all ages need to learn in order to create (output) what they know about literacy, learning, and content knowledge via new literacies?

To put it simply, our students will probably be “writing” using a greater variety of media than people have in the past. In the old days of schooling—way back in the twentieth century—students most often represented their knowledge by writing something using words on a page, perhaps a book report, or essay questions on a paper-and-pencil test. (My dad still talks about creating a diorama model of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre many decades ago, however. So I think teachers have always allowed their students to represent knowledge using alternatives to print.)

As we move from a page-based society to a screen-based society (Kress, 2003), students will need to be able to represent what they know not only on paper, in a linear fashion, using words, but on a screen, still using words, but also using graphics, sound, and motion, and doing so in a nonlinear way. When I say “nonlinear,” I’m thinking of the old Choose Your Adventure books, in which the reader got to choose how the plot progresses and the choices made led to alternative page numbers to continue the story. Writing a text that is embedded with hyperlinks is challenging! Try it sometime! The writer has to be content with the knowledge that a hyperlink that is embedded in the text will take the reader to different texts, and that the reader may never return to the original text. Are there similarities to writing on paper? Yes; both certainly involve a knowledge of verbal communication including organization and word choice and mechanics (conventions). But there are additional layers that must be understood by someone who wants to communicate effectively in this new, nonlinear way. The writer of a hyperlinked text must know something about the affordances provided by digital texts.

Also, now that we are in a “Web 2.0” world, we need to bring its interactivity, or social networking, into our classrooms. For years, many thinkers about literacy have posited that literacy is a social act. The use of blogs, wikis, and Nings in classrooms now allows students to learn just how collaboratively we read and write texts. Furthermore, in this “flattened,” increasingly global world (Friedman, 2005), we have the opportunity to open up our classroom conversations to the entire world. If for no other reason than that the new Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) promotes reading and writing in these new ways, we need to get these new forms of reading and writing into our schools.

What are today’s teachers need to know about these new literacies?

It’s hard to pin down exactly what teachers should know about these new literacies, because they are multiplying so rapidly. Perhaps the best thing for teachers to know about new literacies is that they don’t have to know everything about them! I think what scares some teachers about these new literacies is that they feel that the students will know more about these new media than they will. Even younger teachers—those born after 1990, for example—have fears that they will be shown up by their techno-savvy students. We teachers have to let that fear go. I have tried to let go of the fear in my own classroom, as I routinely encounter students who know much more than I do about video editing software, for example, or e-readers. Teachers (at all levels...
The Importance of Belief Systems

Are some belief systems better than others? The answer to the question lies not with the authors of this or any comprehensive text on reading telling you the “right way” to think about teaching and learning to read but in the process of coming to know about literacy learning. The more you know about what readers and writers do and the roles that reading and writing play in the lives of children, the more empowered you are to respond to a question of such personal and professional importance.

Belief systems related to literacy learning are not a collection of naive assumptions and presuppositions but rather a set of beliefs that are grounded in research and current thinking about reading and writing. As suggested in the International Reading Association’s Standards for Reading Professionals (2010), beliefs are built on an organized and specific set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are needed to influence students’ reading achievement. We as authors have core beliefs that underlie the writing of this text. Suffice it to say that what we, as authors of this text, believed about some aspects of reading and learning to read has changed considerably since we entered the teaching field, primarily because the knowledge base has changed. Nevertheless, there are some beliefs about children, teachers, teaching and learning, and how children learn to read and use reading to learn that have remained constant since we entered the teaching profession. If we were to characterize our worldview of reading and learning to read today, we would affirm that our beliefs are rooted in an interactive view of the reading process and a comprehensive view of reading instruction—concepts that will be developed in this chapter and throughout the text.

One of the best ways to start is to create a Twitter account and start following experts in your teaching area. You are welcome to start by following me, William Kist, at www.twitter.com/williamkist. Check out those I’m following and you will probably be amazed at the educational leaders and scholars and classroom teachers who are regularly imparting their best ideas in 140 characters or less! The best way to learn about new literacies is to jump in yourself.

What are some alternative ways to develop student comprehension via new literacies?

Currently, there are many students who are challenged to comprehend printed text in a textbook. Now we are throwing at these students not only words but also visual art, motion pictures, sound, and advertising. And we’re also asking them to be much more critical of sources than we have in the past, especially with the development of volunteer-produced web sites such as Wikipedia. Speaking of Wikipedia, we’re also asking students to construct knowledge in a different way than they have in the past. These new media have a more social nature to them. In a more traditional school environment, we have tended to equate “comprehension” with “memorization” done in isolation. (If anything, these new media are probably pushing us to make changes in schools that should have been made long ago.) In short, these new literacies are transforming the way people “comprehend” and write about their world. There are many more layers, I believe, to teaching reading and writing skills than there have been in the past.

The good news is that these new media texts may be more engaging for students than the old-fashioned textbook has been. These new media may draw in students who, in the past, have been left cold by a textbook representation of the Civil War, for example, or the migratory patterns of the starling. In a new media environment, a student might be able to play a multiplayer Civil War role-playing game online, reenacting a battle with other players. That student might also be able to follow the flight pattern of a starling in a motion video that is linked to Google Maps, and might even see the starling fly over his or her hometown!

One of the main comprehension skills that our students will need to have is the ability to sort through the immense amount of material available on any given subject. No matter what is being studied, thousands and thousands of words (and images and sounds) are instantaneously available and downloadable. One of our key tasks as reading/language arts teachers will be to help our students navigate this world of many texts, even as it is constantly changing.

Are some belief systems better than others? The answer to the question lies not with the authors of this or any comprehensive text on reading telling you the “right way” to think about teaching and learning to read but in the process of coming to know about literacy learning. The more you know about what readers and writers do and the roles that reading and writing play in the lives of children, the more empowered you are to respond to a question of such personal and professional importance.

Belief systems related to literacy learning are not a collection of naive assumptions and presuppositions but rather a set of beliefs that are grounded in research and current thinking about reading and writing. As suggested in the International Reading Association’s Standards for Reading Professionals (2010), beliefs are built on an organized and specific set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are needed to influence students’ reading achievement. We as authors have core beliefs that underlie the writing of this text. Suffice it to say that what we, as authors of this text, believed about some aspects of reading and learning to read has changed considerably since we entered the teaching field, primarily because the knowledge base has changed. Nevertheless, there are some beliefs about children, teachers, teaching and learning, and how children learn to read and use reading to learn that have remained constant since we entered the teaching profession. If we were to characterize our worldview of reading and learning to read today, we would affirm that our beliefs are rooted in an interactive view of the reading process and a comprehensive view of reading instruction—concepts that will be developed in this chapter and throughout the text.
How Teachers Come to Know About Reading and Learning to Read

Teachers come to know in different ways. For example, in a lifetime of interaction with the world around us, we acquire knowledge about reading and learning to read by building it from the inside as we interact with people, processes, ideas, and things. Jean Piaget’s theory of constructivism provides a compelling explanatory framework for understanding the acquisition of knowledge. Piaget, one of the preeminent child psychologists of the twentieth century, theorized that children do not internalize knowledge directly from the outside but construct it from inside their heads, in interaction with the environment. When constructivist thinking is applied to the acquisition of knowledge about teaching and learning, it holds that teachers engage in a process of seeking and making meaning from personal, practical, and professional experiences.

Constructing Personal Knowledge

Personal knowledge of reading and learning to read grows out of a teacher’s history as a reader and a writer. Consider, for example, the influences in your life that have shaped the literate person you are. From birth, you have interacted with people (parents, teachers, siblings, friends, and significant others) and things (all kinds of literacy artifacts and texts, including books, signs, letters, labels, pencil and paper, word processors, e-mails, and the Internet) to construct knowledge about the processes of reading and writing. By engaging in reading and writing, you come to know in a very personal way what readers and writers do and the contributions that reading and writing make to a life. You belong to what Frank Smith (1988) calls the “literacy club” by virtue of the fact that you read and write.

The development of an autobiographical narrative is a powerful tool that helps you link your personal history as a reader to instructional beliefs and practices. Not all teachers like to read, even though they know how. Some may read well and be well read. But others may have struggled as readers and bear the emotional scars to prove it. How do these realities affect what teachers do in classroom situations?

An autobiographical narrative helps you inquire into the past in order to better understand what you do in the present and what you would like to do in future classroom situations. Teachers who engage in narrative inquiry explore mental pictures of memories, incidents, or situations in their lives. The inquiry allows teachers to reflect, make connections, and understand why some decisions are made.

To develop a reading autobiography, consider the questions in Figure 1.2. You may wish to share your narratives with others. What beliefs, values, and attitudes are an integral part of your stories? How do your personal histories of reading and learning to read influence where you are in your thinking about reading and where you would like to be?

Constructing Practical Knowledge

Teachers also construct practical knowledge, which is closely related to personal knowledge in that it grows out of experience both in and out of the classroom. The more that you work with and observe students in literacy situations in classroom and community contexts and reflect on their behavior and your own, the more you develop theories about what is the best practice for the readers and writers with whom you work. Practical knowledge is characterized by the beliefs, values, and
attitudes that you construct about readers and writers, texts, reading and writing processes, learning to read and write, and the role of the teacher in the development of children’s literate behavior.

In teacher education programs, field experiences and student teaching are vehicles for acquiring practical knowledge. In addition, interactions with and observations of practicing teachers influence the way you might think about reading and learning to read in classroom situations. At times, preservice teachers may find incongruities between what is taught in education courses and what they observe in the field. These incongruities create conceptual conflict. This conflict is healthy because it helps reflective students of literacy think more deeply about their own understandings, beliefs, and practices.

The construction of practical knowledge extends beyond classroom situations and includes interactions within the cultural context of school and community. For example, a teacher’s beliefs about reading and learning to read may be affected by the beliefs of colleagues and administrators, school board policies, curriculum guidelines, the publishing and testing industry, public opinion, and standards for teaching reading.

Constructing Professional Knowledge and Expertise

As an integral part of their professional development, teachers interact with the world of ideas. Professional education organizations, such as the International Reading Association, refer to what teachers ought to know and be able to do in order to teach reading well as standards or the knowledge base.

Professional knowledge is knowledge acquired from an ongoing study of the practice of teaching. What teacher education programs do best is help preservice and inservice teachers build a knowledge base that is grounded in current theory, research, and practice. Throughout their professional development, the books and journals teachers read, the courses and workshops they take, and the conferences they attend contribute to the vision they have of reading and learning to read.

The instructional differences among teachers reflect the knowledge they put to use in classroom situations. While few would argue that nothing is as practical as a good theory, we embrace the notion that there's nothing as theoretical as a good practice. Teachers construct theories of reading and learning to read based on their ways of knowing, which influence the way they teach, including the ways they plan, use and select texts, interact with learners, and assess literate activity. In turn, the decisions teachers
make about instruction influence students’ reading performance and their perceptions of and attitudes toward reading, as illustrated in Figure 1.3.

Coming to know what readers do is no easy matter. Part of the challenge that teachers encounter comes from the complex, elusive nature of the reading process. Who can ever really know a process that takes place in the mind? The best we can do is investigate reading and learning to read by inquiring into literacy teaching and learning. The inquiry process can be made easier with assistance from a literacy coach. Using their expertise in reading and learning to read, literacy coaches provide professional development opportunities and resources. Literacy coaches help develop expertise in the classroom.

The role of the literacy coach varies. As reported in the International Reading Association’s 2010 Standards for Reading Professionals, the primary role of the reading coach is to support teacher learning. Coaches provide a variety of activities while in a nonevaluative role. Such activities include developing curriculum with colleagues, making professional development presentations to teachers, modeling lessons, providing resources, and visiting classrooms to provide feedback.

The responsibility of the literacy coach also varies across ages. According to Puig and Froelich (2007), the elementary coach’s role focuses on promoting a more comprehensive literacy program, whereas in the middle and high schools, literacy coaches support the teachers using reading and writing to develop content area knowledge. No matter how reading is taught, constructing professional knowledge is essential. Personal, practical, and professional experiences are the stepping-stones to knowing about reading and learning to read.

A reading professional, whether novice or veteran, continually needs to study the knowledge base from multidisciplinary perspectives. Because reading and learning to read are complex processes, no one field of study provides all the answers. Understanding reading from multiple perspectives allows teachers to affirm, change, or let go of what they believe and value in light of new knowledge and research. Multidisciplinary perspectives on reading and learning to read enrich and broaden the knowledge base so that teachers are in the very best position to use their professional expertise and judgment to make instructional decisions.
A single discipline cannot provide a teacher with the insights and understandings needed to guide and support literacy learning in the modern world. The fields of education, linguistics, cognitive psychology, technology, sociology, and anthropology, to name a few, contribute in important ways to knowledge and beliefs about reading and learning to read. From a cognitive perspective, for example, an elementary teacher needs to understand, among other things, how children learn words in an alphabetic system of writing such as English; from a language perspective, how children’s knowledge of written language emerges and develops naturally in early childhood to form the basis for literacy learning; and from a sociocultural perspective, how children’s home language and community values influence language use and literacy learning.

Research on reading in the past three decades has centered primarily on the roles of cognition and language in reading acquisition. Cognitive studies have provided insights into how people comprehend and learn as they process written symbols. Cognitive scientists and researchers are interested in how reading works inside people’s minds—how readers learn to decode words accurately and automatically in an alphabetic writing system, how readers use prior knowledge (schemas) to understand what they are reading, and how readers use and develop strategies to regulate and monitor comprehension as they learn from written language.

Language and literacy learning are inseparable. Learning to read needs to be understood in terms of learning to use written language effectively. One of the most important ways people learn is through the use of language—spoken, written, or signed. Children need the opportunity to share literacy experiences. Encouraging children to talk aloud in deliberate and substantive interactions with adults helps them to develop effective oral language (Biemiller, 2006). Shared book experiences, oral reading, and role playing are a few activities that connect oral and written language. Engaging students in playful and meaningful print activities also provides them the occasion to learn how print works. Children are inherently social, so setting up social situations in which they can share oral and written language enhances their language skills. If children perceive little use for oral and written language, they will have a difficult time learning to read and write. However, if language is meaningful, the social and cultural situations in which it is used allow children to discern what reading and writing are all about.

Cognitive Insights into Reading and Learning to Read

A university colleague of ours, a cognitive psychologist by training, says he’s been researching and studying the reading process for more than two decades because he’s interested in “how the mind works.” How the mind works is another way of saying that he’s interested in understanding cognitive and metacognitive processes in reading. His inquiries into the reading process embrace a psychological perspective. One of the important contributions from cognitive psychology focuses on beginning readers’ discovery of the alphabetic principle in languages such as English. Learning to read involves learning how an alphabetic writing system works.

The Alphabetic Principle and Learning to Read The alphabetic principle suggests that there is a correspondence between letters (graphemes), which are the basic units of writing, and sounds (phonemes). Tunmer and Nicholson (2011) report that in order for children to connect graphemes and phonemes, adult interaction to facilitate development is required. The teacher has an active role in this process. Therefore, a teacher
Chapter 1  Knowledge and Beliefs About Reading

needs to understand how beginning readers come to master the alphabetic system and use their knowledge of English writing to identify words.

However, before you consider how beginners learn to identify words accurately and quickly, participate in the two demonstrations that follow. These demonstrations make clear what skilled readers know about the alphabetic system and how they use their knowledge for accurate and automatic word identification.

Suppose the following lines were flashed on a screen in half-second intervals, and you were asked to write down what you could remember after each line was flashed.

Line 1
Line 2
Line 3
Line 4
Line 5
Line 6

When we have conducted this demonstration with preservice teachers in reading methods classes, here’s what usually happens.

Most class members are unable to recall accurately the squiggly marks on line 1. They are able to remember some, but not all, of the letters in line 2. Both the nonword boragle in line 3, which follows conventional English spelling patterns, and the word institution in line 4 are usually recalled. Students are unable to recall all the words in line 5, but the whole string of words in line 6, which makes a sentence, is usually recalled.

What can we learn from this demonstration? Human beings can make about four fixations per second with their eyes (Smith, 1985). When looking at the flashed items, skilled readers use about 50 milliseconds of visual intake and then use 200 milliseconds to process the intake. During the intake, they can probably attend to only about five to seven items—the range of items most human beings can hold in short-term memory. When looking at each of the six lines for a half second, the limitations of short-term memory (being able to recall five to seven items) operate. What changes line by line is the nature of the items. Skilled readers are able to recognize some of the items quickly and accurately because they are able to perceive them as letter patterns or units of written language. These patterns are recognized by skilled readers as familiar spelling patterns or sight words.

In line 1, skilled college-level readers are unable to group the marks, which we’ll call “squiggles,” into meaningful patterns. The reason is simple: They have no prior knowledge of the squiggles. These squiggles have not been learned as an orthography. Skilled readers have internalized the shapes of alphabetic letters, their names, and the sounds they symbolize. But they aren’t the least bit familiar with the shapes of the individual squiggles in line 1 or whether the squiggles function as written symbols that represent sounds.

In line 2, the black squiggly marks are recognized as individual letters in English writing. However, within the time constraints of a half-second interval, college readers cannot group all of the letters into meaningful letter patterns. As a result, they have difficulty holding all the letters in short-term memory.

In lines 3, 4, and 5, skilled readers can group the letters into familiar spelling patterns. Boragle and institution are easily recalled by most college students when flashed on a screen. Even though boragle is a nonsense word, the letter patterns are consistent and predictable. Institution is recalled as a known sight word.

Most of the college students in our classes cannot in a half second recall all of the words in line 5 because these words cannot be strung together into a meaningful utterance. However, the students stand a greater chance of recalling line 6 precisely because
the string of words makes a meaningful sentence that they are able to decode, based on their immediate sight recognition of known words.

Now read these two lists, both containing nonwords:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List 1</th>
<th>List 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>scrass</td>
<td>tblc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sook</td>
<td>gfpv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toly</td>
<td>oeaui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amittature</td>
<td>rtbm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lanfication</td>
<td>gdhtaiueo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which list is easier to read? Use what you learned from the first demonstration to respond to the question.

List 1, of course, is fairly easy for skilled readers to read, but list 2 is nearly impossible. The reason why list 1 is easier to read than list 2, as you might have surmised, involves your skill at identifying letter patterns. “English is an alphabetic system that consists of mapping between graphemes and phonemes within words” (Ehri, 2011, p. 232). Skilled readers can connect written English letter patterns to sounds. They know that scr is likely to occur in English writing but that tblc is not likely to occur.

When skilled readers encounter multisyllable words (or even nonwords that contain common orthographic patterns), they depend on their ability to group these patterns into syllables. This is done by using their knowledge of likely and unlikely letter sequences. We know that the letters lan would go together to pronounce “lan,” and that fi, ca, and tion should be treated as clusters of letters that we chunk together or treat as a group. Cognitive studies show that skillful readers chunk words into syllables automatically, in the course of perceiving letters. Skilled readers are able to do this because of their knowledge of likely spelling patterns, or **orthographic knowledge**. This knowledge is so thoroughly learned that skilled readers devote less attention to encoding and put less energy into identifying words (Templeton, 2011).

From an instructional perspective, then, it is important to know how to help beginning readers develop into skilled readers who can identify words quickly and accurately as they read. When young children begin reading, their eyes encounter three units of written language: letters, words, and sentences. The visual display of words on the page makes the learning of words easier. This can be determined in the following:

Reading and writing are complex processes that require explicit instruction.

Because of the use of spaces—a print convention that evolved with Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century—the visual display of written language creates a system of distinct, perceptual units called words. According to Ehri (1995), during the course of learning to read, the eyes come to favor written words over letters and sentences: “The advantage of words over sentences is that words can be assimilated in one glance. The advantage of words over letters is that written words correspond more reliably to spoken words than letters correspond to sounds” (p. 171). Because words are the primary units of written language, helping beginners develop word-reading skill is one of the important instructional responsibilities of teachers in learning to read. Other print conventions—directionality, upper- and lowercase usage, and punctuation—all need to be considered and will affect students’ ability to form words, and read accurately and fluently. Although beginners have developed some knowledge of written language prior to first grade, explicit instruction becomes essential as children progress through various phases of word-reading development and develop strategies to read words quickly and accurately.
How children think and reason with print is an important concern in this text. A cognitive view of reading suggests that the reader’s ability to construct meaning is at the core of the process. The constructive processes characteristic of reading comprehension have been of intense interest to cognitive psychologists and reading researchers for more than a decade. In particular, they have studied the role that schemata play in comprehending texts.

**Schema Theory and Reading Comprehension**  
Schemata reflect the prior knowledge, experiences, conceptual understandings, attitudes, values, skills, and procedures a reader brings to a reading situation. Students use what they know already to give meaning to new events and experiences. Cognitive psychologists use the singular term *schema* to describe how humans organize and construct meaning in their heads. Schemata have been called “the building blocks of cognition” (Rumelhart, 1982) and “a cognitive map to the world” (Neisser, 1976) because they represent elaborate networks of concepts, skills, and procedures that we use to make sense of new stimuli, events, and situations. Rueda (2011) emphasizes that “Automatic processing of schemas requires minimal working memory resources and allows problem solving to proceed with minimal effort” (p. 93). Therefore, meaning making while reading becomes more efficient.

In order to help understand schema, for example, do you possess the schemata needed to interpret the following passage?

> When evidence of the failure is first observed, stop the subject immediately before more damage is done. Continue to observe the subject in more detail to determine the exact location and nature of the failure. In most cases the failure will be readily apparent, but for an inexperienced observer care must be taken to ensure the proper location is selected since the observer will most likely have only one opportunity to correct the failure.

Upon first reading the passage, it may seem difficult to understand unless you were able to activate an appropriate schema. How many of you recognized that the passage had to do with getting a flat tire? Once a schema for getting a flat tire is activated, the words and phrases in the passage take on new meaning. Now try rereading the passage. Upon rereading, you will probably react by saying, “Aha! Now that I know the passage is about getting a flat tire, it makes sense!” Ambiguous words such as *subject, opportunity,* and *failure* are now interpreted within the framework of what you know about having a flat tire. The more you know about flat tires, the more comprehensible the passage becomes. When readers activate appropriate schemata, *expectations* are raised for the meaning of the text. Your expectations for the passage help you anticipate meaning and relate information from the passage to things you already know.

The more we hear, see, read, or experience new information, the more we refine and expand existing schemata within our language system.

Schemata, as you can see, influence reading comprehension and learning. For comprehension to happen, readers must activate or build a schema that fits with information from a text. When a good fit occurs, schema functions in at least three ways to facilitate comprehension. First, schema provides a framework that allows readers to organize text information efficiently and effectively. The ability to integrate and organize new information into old facilitates retention. Second, schema allows readers to make inferences about what happens or is likely to happen in a text. Inferences, for example, help children predict upcoming information or fill in gaps in the material. And third, schema helps readers elaborate on the material. Elaboration is a powerful aspect of reasoning with print. When children elaborate on what they have read, they engage in cognitive activity that involves speculation, judgment, and evaluation.
Metacognition and Learning  

Metacognition, defined generally by Ann Brown (1985), refers to knowledge about and regulation of some form of cognitive activity. In the case of reading, metacognition refers to (1) self-knowledge—the knowledge students have about themselves as readers and learners; (2) task knowledge—the knowledge of reading tasks and the strategies that are appropriate given a task at hand; and (3) self-monitoring—the ability of students to monitor reading by keeping track of how well they are comprehending.

Consider the following scenario, one that is quite common when working with struggling readers: When reading orally, a student comes to a word in the text that he doesn’t recognize. Stymied, he looks to the teacher for help. The teacher has at least four options to consider in deciding how to respond to the reader: (1) Tell him the word, (2) ask him to “sound it out,” (3) ask him to take an “educated guess,” or (4) tell him to say “blank” and keep on reading.

What would you do? A rationale, based on what you know and believe about teaching reading, can be developed for each of the options or for that matter, a combination. For example, “First, I’d ask him to sound out the word, and if that didn’t work, I’d tell him the word.” Or, “First, I’d ask him to take a good guess based on what word might make sense, and if that didn’t work, I’d ask him to say ‘blank’ and keep on reading.”

Options 2 through 4 represent strategies to solve a particular problem that occurs during reading—identifying an unfamiliar word. Sounding out an unfamiliar word is one strategy frequently taught to beginners. When using a sounding-out strategy, a reader essentially tries to associate sounds with letters or letter combinations. An emphasis on sounding out in and of itself is a limited strategy because it doesn’t teach or make children aware of the importance of monitoring what is read for comprehension. A teacher builds a child’s metacognition when sounding out is taught in conjunction with making sense. For example, a teacher follows up a suggestion to sound out an unfamiliar word by asking, “Does the word make sense? Does what you read sound like language?”

Option 3, taking an educated guess, asks the reader to identify a word that makes sense in the context of the sentence in which the word is located or the text itself. The implicit message to the reader is that reading is supposed to make sense. If a child provides a word other than the unfamiliar word but preserves the meaning of the text, the teacher would be instructionally and theoretically consistent by praising the child and encouraging him to continue reading.

The fourth option, say “blank” and keep on reading, is also a metacognitive strategy for word identification because it shows the reader that reading is not as much a word-perfect process as it is a meaning-making process. No one word should stop a reader cold. If the reader is monitoring the text for meaning, he may be able to return to the word and identify it or decide that the word wasn’t that important to begin with.

The teacher can make the implicit messages about reading strategies explicit. Throughout this text, we will use terms associated with explicit instruction: modeling, demonstrating, explaining, rationale-building, thinking aloud, and reflecting. From an instructional point of view, these terms reflect practices that allow teachers to help students develop metacognitive awareness and strategic knowledge. For example, Arch,
the first-grade teacher discussed earlier in this chapter, chooses to engage the reader—after she has taken a good guess at the unfamiliar word and completes reading—in a brief discussion of the importance of identifying words that “make sense” and “sound like language” in the context of what’s being read. Such metacognitive discussions have the potential to build self-knowledge and task knowledge and also to strengthen the reader’s self-monitoring abilities.

**Self-Knowledge**  
Do children know what reading is for? Do they know what the reader’s role is? Do they know their options? Are they aware of their strengths as readers and learners? Do they recognize that some texts are harder than others and that all texts should not be read alike? Questions such as these reflect the self-knowledge component of metacognition. When readers are aware of *self* in relation to *texts* and *tasks*, they are in a better position to use reading strategies effectively (Armbruster, Echols, & Brown, 1982).

**Task Knowledge**  
Experienced readers are strategic readers. They use their task knowledge to meet the demands inherent in difficult texts. For example, they know how to analyze a reading task, reflect on what they know or don’t know about the text to be read, establish purposes and plans for reading, and evaluate their progress in light of purposes for reading. Experienced readers are often aware of whether they have understood what they have read. And if they haven’t, they know what to do when comprehension fails.

**Self-Monitoring**  
Reading becomes second nature to most of us as we develop experience with and maturity in the process. Experienced readers operate on “automatic pilot” as they read, until they run into a problem that disrupts the flow. For example, read the following passage:

> The boys’ arrows were nearly gone, so they sat down on the grass and stopped hunting. Over at the edge of the woods they saw Henry making a bow to a little girl who was coming down the road. She had tears in her dress and also tears in her eyes. She gave Henry a note, which he brought over to the group of young hunters. Read to the boys it caused great excitement. After a minute but rapid examination of their weapons, they ran down the valley. Does were standing at the edge of the lake, making an excellent target. (author unknown)

Now reflect on the experience. At what points during reading did a “built-in sensor” in your head begin to signal to you that something was wrong? At what point in the passage did you become aware that some of the words you were misreading were homonyms and that you were choosing the inappropriate pronunciations of one or more of the homonyms? What did you do to rectify your misreadings? Why do you suppose the “sensor” signaled disruptions in your reading?

As experienced readers, we expect reading to make sense. And as we interact with a text, the metacognitive “sensor” in each of us monitors whether what we’re reading is making sense.

What reader hasn’t chosen an inappropriate pronunciation, come across a concept too difficult to grasp, or become lost in an author’s line of reasoning? What experienced reader hasn’t sensed that a text is too difficult to understand the first time around? The difference, of course, between the experienced and inexperienced reader is that the former knows when something’s wrong and often employs correction strategies to get back on track. The strategic reader also has the confidence and belief that he or she can succeed in understanding what is read, leading to more motivation and
engagement in the reading process (Vacca, 2006). This is what monitoring comprehension is all about.

Metacognitive ability is related to both age and reading experience (Stewart & Tei, 1983). Older students are more strategic in their reading than younger students, and good readers demonstrate more ability to use metacognition to deal with problems that arise during reading than readers with limited proficiency. Nevertheless, the instructional implications of metacognition are evident throughout this text. Becoming literate is a process of becoming aware not only of oneself as a reader but also of strategies that help solve problems that arise before, during, and after reading. A classroom environment that nurtures metacognitive functioning is crucial to children's literacy development.

**Reading from a Language Perspective**

Cognition and language are crucial components of human development. Although the acquisition of language is a complex process, many children understand and use all of the basic language patterns by the time they are 6 years old. A child's apparent facility with language is best understood by recognizing the active relationship between cognition and language.

Jean Piaget (1973) spent most of his life observing children and their interactions with their environment. His theory of cognitive development helps explain that language acquisition is influenced by more general cognitive attainments. As children explore their environment, they interpret and give meaning to the events they experience. The child's need to interact with immediate surroundings and to manipulate objects is critical to language development. From a Piagetian view, language reflects thought and does not necessarily shape it.

Lev Vygotsky (1962, 1978), the acclaimed Russian psychologist, also viewed children as active participants in their own learning. However, at some point in their early development, children begin to acquire language competence; as they do so, language stimulates cognitive development. Gradually, Vygotsky believed, they begin to regulate their own problem-solving activities through the mediation of egocentric speech. In other words, children carry on external dialogues with themselves. Eventually external dialogue gives way to inner speech.

According to both Piaget and Vygotsky, children must be actively involved in order to grow and learn. Merely reacting to the environment isn't enough. An important milestone in a child's development, for example, is the ability to analyze means–ends relationships. When this occurs, children begin to acquire the ability to use language to achieve goals.

The linguistic sophistication of young children cannot be underestimated or taken for granted. Yet the outdated notion that children develop speech by imitation still persists among people who have little appreciation or knowledge of oral language development. The key to learning oral language lies in the opportunities children have to explore and experiment with language toward purposeful ends. As infants grow into toddlers, they learn to use language as an instrument for their intentions: "I want" becomes a favorite phrase. No wonder M. A. K. Halliday (1975) described learning oral language as a "saga in learning to mean."

When teachers embrace reading as a language process, they not only understand the importance of learning oral language but also are acutely aware that written language develops in humans along parallel lines. Children learn to use written language in much the same manner that they learn to use oral language—naturally and purposefully. As Goodman (1986) put it, "Why do people create and learn written language?
They need it! How do they learn it? The same way they learn oral language, by using it in authentic literary events that meet their needs” (p. 24).

Ultimately, there’s only one way to become proficient as a writer and reader, and that’s by writing and reading. When opportunities abound for children to engage in real literacy events (writing and reading), they grow as users of written language.

When language is splintered into its parts and the parts are isolated from one another for instructional purposes, learning to read becomes more difficult than it needs to be. The whole language concept, originated by Kenneth and Yetta Goodman (1986), reflects the way some teachers think about language and literacy. They plan teaching activities that support students in their use of all aspects of language in learning to read. Keeping language “whole” drives home the point that splintering written language into bits and pieces, to be taught and learned separately from one another, makes learning to read harder, not easier. Support for more holistic teaching comes from two areas of language inquiry: psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics.

Psycholinguistics and Reading  A psycholinguistic view of reading combines a psychological understanding of the reading process with an understanding of how language works. Psycholinguistic inquiries into the reading process suggest that readers act on and interact with written language in an effort to make sense of a text. Reading is not a passive activity; it is an active thinking process that takes place “behind the eyes.” Nor is reading an exact process. All readers make mistakes—“miscues” as Kenneth Goodman (1973) calls them. Why? Miscues are bound to occur because readers are continually anticipating meaning and sampling a text for information cues based on their expectations. In fact, readers search for and coordinate information cues from three distinct systems in written language: the graphophonemic, the syntactic, and the semantic.

Graphophonemic System  This system relies upon the print itself in order to provide readers with a major source of information: The graphic symbols or marks on the page represent speech sounds. The more experience readers have with written language, the more they learn about regular and irregular letter–sound relationships. Experienced readers acquire enough knowledge of sounds associated with letter symbols that they do not have to use all the available graphic information in a word in order to decode or recognize it.

Syntactic System  This system depends on readers’ possessing knowledge about how language works. Syntactic information is provided by the grammatical relationships within sentence patterns. In other words, readers use their knowledge of the meaningful arrangement of words in sentences to construct meaning from text material.

The order of words provides important information cues during reading. For example, although children may be able to read the words “ran race the quickly children the,” they would make little sense out of what they read. The meaning is not clear until the words are arranged like so: “The children quickly ran the race.” In addition, readers use syntactic information to anticipate a word or phrase that “must come next” in a sentence because of its grammatical relationship to other words in the sentence. For example, most children reading the sentence “I saw a red ____” would probably fill in the blank with a noun because they intuitively know how language works.
**Semantic System** This system of language stores the schemata that readers bring to a text in terms of background knowledge, experiences, conceptual understandings, attitudes, beliefs, and values.

**Sociolinguistics and Reading** In the child’s first several years, skill in spoken language develops naturally and easily. Children discover what language does for them. They learn that language is a tool they can use and understand in interactions with others in their environment. They also learn that language is intentional; it has many purposes. Among the most obvious is communication. The more children use language to communicate, the more they learn the many special functions it serves.

Halliday (1975) viewed language as a reflection of what makes us uniquely human. His monumental work explored how language functions in our day-to-day interactions and serves the personal, social, and academic facets of our lives. Language plays a central role in learning. Use and context of oral and written language influence literacy development. Some uses include communicating, information seeking, self-expression, enjoyment, and perpetuating information. These functions of language are context dependent. How one uses language in school, home, community, and informal environments influences the meaningfulness of oral and written language.

Because reading is uniquely human, learning to read requires sharing, interaction, and collaboration. Parent–child, teacher–student, and student–student relations and participation patterns are essential in learning to read. To what extent do children entering school have experience operating and communicating in a group as large as that found in the typical classroom? Children must learn the ropes. In many cases, kindergarten may be the first place where children must follow and respect the rules that govern how to operate and cooperate in groups. Not only must they know how and when to work independently and how and when to share and participate, but they must also learn the rules that govern communicative behavior. This is essential for students of all ages.

Communicative competence, as defined by Hymes (1974), develops differently in different children because they have not all had the same set of experiences or opportunities to engage in communication in the home or in the community. Some preschoolers have acquired more competence than others as to when and when not to speak and as to what to talk about, with whom, where, and in what manner. The sociolinguistic demands on a 5- or 6-year-old are staggering. As students age, more communicative competence develops. However, although middle school students have increased communication competence, motivation to participate in the social context of the classroom may be lacking. Opportunities for middle grade students to be involved in independent thought and language are closely linked to students’ motivation for and engagement in reading and writing activities (Many, Ariail, & Fox, 2011). Therefore, literacy instruction needs to be focused on students’ motivation, interests, and developmental needs.

Because a large part of learning to read will depend on the social and cultural context of the classroom, opportunities must abound for discussions and conversations between teacher and student and among students. Within this context, students must demonstrate (1) an eagerness to be independent; (2) an unquenchable zest to explore the new and unknown; (3) the courage to take risks, try things out, and experience success as well as some defeat; (4) the enjoyment of being with others and learning from them; and (5) a willingness to view themselves as readers.
Models of Reading

Models of the reading process often depict the act of reading as a communication event between a sender (the writer) and a receiver of information (the reader). Generally speaking, language information flows from the writer to the reader in the sense that the writer has a message to send and transmits it through print to the reader, who then must interpret its meaning. Reading models have been developed to describe the way readers use language information to construct meaning from print. How a reader translates print to meaning is the key issue in the building of models of the reading process. This issue has led to the development of three classes of models: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive.

**Bottom-up models** of reading assume that the process of translating print to meaning begins with the print. The process is initiated by **decoding** graphic symbols into sounds. The reader first identifies features of letters; links these features together to recognize letters; combines letters to recognize spelling patterns; links spelling patterns to recognize words; and then proceeds to sentence-, paragraph-, and text-level processing.

**Top-down models** of reading assume that the process of translating print to meaning begins with the reader’s prior knowledge. The process is initiated by making predictions or “educated guesses” about the meaning of some unit of print. Readers decode graphic symbols into sounds to “check out” hypotheses about meaning.

**Interactive models** of reading assume that the process of translating print to meaning involves making use of both prior knowledge and print. The process is initiated by making predictions about meaning and/or decoding graphic symbols. The reader formulates hypotheses based on the interaction of information from semantic, syntactic, and graphophonemic sources of information.

The terms **top-down**, **bottom-up**, and **interactive** are used extensively in the fields of communication and information processing. When these terms are used to describe reading, they also explain how language systems operate in reading.

Models of reading attempt to describe how readers use semantic, syntactic, and graphophonemic information in translating print to meaning. It is precisely in these descriptions that bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models of reading differ. Figures 1.4 and 1.5 show the flow of information in each reading model. Note that these illustrations are general depictions of information processing during reading and do not refer specifically to models such as those in Singer and Ruddell’s *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading* (1985).

**Bottom-Up Models**

As illustrated in Figure 1.4, the process of deriving meaning from print in bottom-up models is triggered by graphic information embedded in print. This is why bottom-up models are described as being “data-driven.” Data in this case are the letters and words on the page. A prototype model for bottom-up processing was constructed by Gough (1985), who attempted to show what happens in “one second of reading.” In Gough’s model, reading involves a series of steps that occur within milliseconds in the mind of the reader. The reader takes one “linguistic step” after another, beginning with the recognition of key features in letters and continuing letter by letter, word by word, and sentence by sentence until reaching the top—the meaning of the text being read. The reading model by Samuels (1994) is also essentially bottom-up. However, the Samuels model incorporates the idea of automaticity. The concept of automaticity suggests that humans can attend to only one thing at a time but may be able to process many things...
at once as long as no more than one requires attention. Automaticity is similar to putting an airplane on automatic pilot and freeing the pilot to direct his or her attention to other things.

In reading, decoding and comprehending vie for the reader’s attention. Readers must learn to process graphophonemic information so rapidly that they are free to direct attention to comprehending the text material for meaning. Readers need accurate, automatic word recognition. Promoting the development of automaticity is foundational for the proficient reader (Ehri, 2005).

The young reader is similar to the novice automobile driver. When learning to drive a car, the beginner finds the mechanics of operating the automobile so demanding that he or she must focus exclusively on driving. However, with practice, the skilled driver pays little conscious attention to the mechanics of driving and is able to converse with a passenger or listen to the radio. Likewise, the beginning reader must practice decoding print to speech so rapidly that decoding becomes automatic. As beginners become more fluent in decoding, they can devote their attention to comprehending the writer’s message.

**Top-Down Models**

Top-down models emphasize that information processing during reading is triggered by the reader’s prior knowledge and experience in relation to the writer’s message. Obviously, there are no pure top-down models because readers must begin by focusing on print. As opposed to being data-driven, top-down models are said to be conceptually driven. That is to say, ideas or concepts in the mind of a reader trigger information processing during reading. As Frank Smith (1985) put it, “The more you already know, the less you need to find out” (p. 15). In other words, the more readers know in advance about the topic to be read, the less they need to use graphic information on the page.

To get a better idea of how reading is conceptually driven, read the following story:

**Flan and Glock**

Flan was a flim.
Glock was a plopper.

It was unusual for a flim and a plopper to be crods, but
Flan and Glock were crods. They medged together.
Flan was keaded to moak at a mox. Glock wanted to kead there too. But the lear said he could not kead there.
Glock anged that the lear said he could not kead there because he was a plopper.
Although you’ve never heard of Flan and Glock and don’t know what a flim or a plopper is, it is not difficult to interpret from this short story that Glock was discriminated against. How did you figure this out? Your knowledge of capitalization may have led you to hypothesize that Flan and Glock are proper names. Knowledge of grammar, whether intuitive or overt, undoubtedly helped you realize that *flim*, *plopper*, *crods*, and *mox* are nouns and that *medged* and *keaded* are verbs. Finally, your knowledge of the world led you to predict that since the learner said, “Glock could not kead there because he was a plopper,” Glock is probably a victim of discrimination.

Note that these interpretations of the story are “educated guesses.” However, both prior knowledge and graphophonemic information were required to make these guesses. From our perspective, reading is rarely totally top-down or bottom-up. A third class of models helps explain the interactive nature of the reading process.

**Interactive Models**

Neither prior knowledge nor graphophonemic information is used exclusively by readers. Interactive models as illustrated in Figure 1.5 suggest that the process of reading is initiated by formulating hypotheses about meaning and by decoding letters and words. According to Kamil and Pearson (1979), readers assume either an active or a passive role, depending on the strength of their hypotheses about the meaning of the reading material. If readers bring a great deal of knowledge to the material, chances are that their hypotheses will be strong and that they will process the material actively, making minimal use of graphophonemic information. Passive reading, by contrast, often results when readers have little experience with or knowledge of the topic to be read. They rely much more on the print itself for information cues.

Effective readers know how to interact with print in an effort to understand a writer’s message. Effective readers adapt to the material based on their purposes for reading. Purpose dictates the strategies that readers use to translate print to meaning. Two of the most appropriate questions that readers can ask about a selection are “What do I need to know?” and “How well do I already know it?” These two questions help readers establish purposes for reading and formulate hypotheses during reading. The questions also help readers decide how to coordinate prior knowledge and graphophonemic information.

---

**Figure 1.5** Information Processing in Interactive Models of Reading

*INTERACTIVE PROCESSING:* The act of reading is triggered by the reader's prior knowledge and experience as well as graphophonemic information in order to construct meaning.
What About Standards, Assessment, and Knowledge and Beliefs About Reading?

Note that the models of reading just described don’t take into consideration the social nature of reading and learning to read. In this sense, they’re incomplete. However, models are useful in some respects: They help you reflect on your beliefs, assumptions, and practices related to reading instruction.

RTI for Struggling Readers

Understanding Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RTI), derived from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, is a systematic approach to identification and instruction of struggling readers. With RTI, the identification process for learning disabilities shifts from a focus on the discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability to the emphasis of early support and intervention. School districts have the option to use alternative approaches that employ research-based classroom interventions. If needed, more intensive small group and even individualized instruction are implemented prior to evaluation and identification of a learning disability. The focus of this process is on providing interventions and assessments to develop reading and writing skills and strategies for all students.

Although there are several available RTI models, a three-tiered approach strategy for intervention is used in many school districts. The process within each tier is dependent on each school and its administrative decisions.

- **Tier 1**—All students are provided research-based instruction differentiated to meet each student’s needs. In Tier 1 intervention is considered preventive and proactive.
- **Tier 2**—More intensive work is provided to learners who have not been successful in traditional classroom learning situations. Therefore, more focused small group interventions are implemented with frequent monitoring to measure progress. Regular classroom teachers receive support from special educators and literacy coaches.
- **Tier 3**—Learners receive intensive, individualized intervention targeting specific deficits and problem areas. Regular classroom teachers are responsible for the intervention and assessment processes; special educators and literacy specialists provide support.

This multitiered process involves a collaborative process in which all stakeholders—parents, teachers, literacy specialists, special education teachers, and students—work together to meet the literacy needs of struggling learners.

What About Standards, Assessment, and Knowledge and Beliefs About Reading?

Teachers should understand the theoretical and evidence-based foundations of the reading and writing processes. In addition, they need to make the connection between theory and instructional practices. Teachers who relate major theories and research to support their beliefs are able to utilize the components of reading and writing and literacy development to create an effective learning environment.
Knowledge and beliefs about the teaching of reading and writing have changed over time, especially with the ever-changing legislative influences and curricular demands. The pendulum of thought about what, how, and whom to teach moves continuously. It is therefore critical for literacy professionals to reevaluate their beliefs about the instruction of reading and writing on an ongoing basis. Teachers need to rely on multiple sources of information and other professionals to help guide instructional planning that improves reading and writing achievement of all students.

**Summary**

- Belief systems bring into focus what teachers know, believe, and value—not only about their roles as classroom teachers of reading but also about reading, readers, curriculum standards, instruction, and new literacies.
- Teachers develop belief systems about reading and learning to read through personal, practical, and professional study and experience.
- Because we believe that all teachers are theorists in that they have reasons for their instructional decisions, we examined the reading process from language, social, and psychological perspectives.
- Reading models have been developed to describe the way readers use language information to construct meaning from text. This has led to teaching models of the reading process.

After completing this chapter, test your knowledge of this chapter’s content and concepts by completing this Assessment.

**Teacher Action Research**

Teachers who engage in reflection and inquiry find themselves asking questions and observing closely what goes on in their classrooms. Action research is a way for teachers who want to reflect and inquire to better understand within the context of their own teaching more about themselves as teachers and their students as learners. Several ideas for action research are presented. Some are intended to be done in the field; others are for the classroom.

1. Observe a teacher in an elementary school. Record what you see and hear during reading instruction time. Based on the interactions recorded between teacher and students, what did you learn about the teacher’s knowledge and beliefs about literacy?
2. Using the idea of the reading autobiography, prepare an autobiographical narrative following the directions in Figure 1.2. Share your autobiographical sketch with other members of the class or with colleagues in your school, or with a family member or roommate. What differences in reading development and attitude are evident? What similarities exist?
3. Suppose you are going to be a guest speaker to a group of preservice teachers. The topic is “Theoretical Influences on Reading Instruction.” You have time for a 15-minute presentation. What would you say? Why?
4. Develop your philosophy for the teaching of reading. Include the model of reading you closely align with. Discuss.
The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS-ELA) provide schools a recommended curriculum in order to develop literacy skills. Richard Vacca (see Box 1.2) pointed out that the standards give “schools an opportunity to make decisions about the types of texts that will be used for literacy learning as well as instructional approaches and strategies at different grade levels.” Many decisions will need to be made by the teachers to navigate the “road map” provided by the Common Core State Standards. Teachers will need to reflect and articulate their belief system in order to develop the high learning expectations of the standards.