

# What every elementary teacher should learn about reading instruction

This list highlights essential aspects of reading instruction, but is not intended to convey the breadth and depth of content that new teachers should have received in the course of their pre-service preparation. Much of the referenced practice can occur in classroom simulations.

- 1 Understanding the foundational skills of literacy that produce the highest yield of successful readers, progressing from phonemic awareness to phonics, with ample assignments and practice in how to develop each skill in new readers.
- 2 Appreciating the time and attention required to develop students' fluency skills throughout the elementary grades in order to read text effortlessly, automatically, and, not to be overlooked, with expression, all of which are important for comprehension.
- 3 Knowing the differences between systematic, explicit instruction and implicit, less directed instruction; when and how to use each; as well as the hallmark signs of classroom practices that are aligned with research-based reading instruction (e.g., encouraging students to try to sound out unknown words) and the hallmark signs of practices that are not research-based (e.g., using context or pictures to make a guess when reading words).
- 4 Practicing how to administer and interpret the many ways to assess students' progress in reading, and then learning how to act upon the results appropriately, particularly for students who struggle to read, including those who may have dyslexia.
- 5 Learning about both the effective and less effective ways to build vocabulary; and using word-learning strategies to decipher meanings of unfamiliar words through the use of context, the meanings of word parts, and appropriate dictionary use. Many languages, such as Spanish, are connected to English through their word origins. Studying the morphology, or structure, of words can help English learners identify cognates (words that are the same or similar in both English and their first language), making it easier for them to build their English vocabulary.
- 6 Understanding why accurate spelling and writing skills are important for equipping students to become better readers and critical thinkers, and what appropriate grade-level progression in each looks like.
- 7 Practicing leading high-quality discussions in actual classrooms or in settings designed to simulate an actual classroom, and an understanding of the components needed to have a high quality discussion.
- 8 Understanding research-based comprehension strategies described in the IES Practice Guides (as well as common strategies to avoid because they are not research-based), and their limitations, in that taught once, they do not need to be retaught year after year as many curricula expect, only practiced with increasingly complex texts.
- 9 Acquiring rudimentary knowledge in assessing the difficulty of a text, both from linguistic and content standpoints; learning how best to teach complex texts in actual classrooms and simulated practice.
- 10 Engaging with children's literature from a variety of cultures to curate selections purposefully, engendering in students a love for good stories, a habit of recreational reading, and an appreciation for a variety of cultures.
- 11 Understanding the importance of building students' broad academic knowledge through generous exposure to expository, non-fiction texts, in that it strengthens their vocabulary, reading comprehension, and critical thinking skills, including learning to be smart consumers of information.
- 12 Understanding the structure of the English language, including its speech sounds, spelling system, sentence patterns, and ways texts are organized.
- 13 Not to be overlooked, ensuring that teachers acquire their own broad academic knowledge, specifically in appropriate elementary topics common to elementary curricula for social studies, science, and the arts. It is in the state's interest to assess all of this fundamentally necessary knowledge as a condition of teacher licensure.