

## Six Features of Effective Instructional Practices\*



### Empower your Practice—Put Research to Work for your Students

Researchers have identified effective practices to teach literacy concepts and skills, including these:

1. **Explicit instruction:** Direct teaching of content, strategies, and skills is the hallmark of explicit instruction. This teacher-led instruction is incremental, systematic, and cumulative based on attention to developmental considerations and curricular scope and sequence.
2. **Emphasis on making abstract concepts concrete:** Multisensory techniques—including tangible objects, visuals, graphics, color coding and kinesthetic techniques—help to make abstract concepts concrete. For example, the use of blocks to represent each sound in a spoken word, clapping for each word in a sentence, or color coding the letters representing the vowel sound in a word make abstract language elements more tangible and accessible.
3. **Emphasis on automaticity:** Automaticity helps overcome a key obstacle to learning—the limited capacity of working memory. This is essential in order to move learning to a higher level. Practice that builds to the point of automaticity is critical; sustained practice—that is ongoing review and use of what has been learned—is also necessary to maintain automatic retrieval of skill and content.

4. **Development of meta-cognitive strategies to facilitate transfer of knowledge and skills:** Meta-cognitive strategies, such as learning a mnemonic to recall a letter sound or a jingle to remember how to spell particular words, foster independence in utilizing knowledge and skills. These kinds of strategies also help to free up working memory.
  
5. **Stress on cumulative, systematic, and sequential presentation of content and skills:** The foundation of English—such as its sounds, syllables, and structures—should be presented in a logical order. Emphasis on the essential elements of the language and moving from simple to more complex information contributes to mastery. It is helpful to emphasize high frequency content and skills to facilitate building a strong foundation.
  
6. **Use of data to guide instruction:** Evidence of learning—be it correct words per minute on a fluency probe, error analysis from an oral reading task, or performance on other criterion referenced tasks—provides critical data to inform the focus and pacing of instruction. For example, low fluency rates or patterns of misread words indicate the need for more opportunities for practice or focused instruction on specific sound-spelling patterns or high frequency words as part of lesson planning.

**Learn more about Literacy How's model for evidence-based, empowered teaching.**

\*From the forthcoming book, "Literacy How-To: A Handbook Linking What We Know to What We Do." © 2014 Literacy How, Inc.

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