

# Content Reading and Literacy:

## Overview and Context



# What is reading?

- A complex, purposeful, social and cognitive process in which readers simultaneously use their knowledge of spoken and written language, their knowledge of the topic of the text, and their knowledge of their culture to construct meaning.



# But shouldn't they be "done" with that?

- Reading is not a technical skill acquired once and for all in the primary grades, but rather a developmental process.
- A reader's competence continues to grow through engagement with various types of texts and wide reading for various purposes over a lifetime.



# Key Terms in the Reading Wars

- “Phonics” refers to lessons or programs that teach children strategies for connecting sounds and letter representations—small chunks
- “Whole language” refers to lessons or programs that employ authentic language/literature, teach children to recognize sight words and use context for understanding—larger patterns
- Research shows that a combination of these is most effective for learners



# “Big Picture”, Current Context

- NCLB places renewed emphasis on reading
- Only one view of reading is acceptable
- “Research based” code for phonics
- Overwhelmingly, research demonstrates the value of blended programs



# Portrait of Readers

- On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 69% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 68% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders failed to achieve grade level
- 55% in Minneapolis schools are below grade level
- 30% of students in Minnesota are below grade level



# Literary Reading

- Between 1982 and 2002 literary reading declines 10%
- Rate is accelerating
- Between 1982 and 2002 reading declined 10% among men and 5% among women. In 2002 55% of women read literature while 37% of men did
- Literary reading declining among Whites, African Americans, Hispanics
- Declining among all education levels—In 2002 67% of college grads read (73% in 1982)
- In 1982 young adults (age 18-24) were most likely group to read literature. In 2002 this group was the least likely.



# Implications?

- Other texts must be incorporated and accounted for—nonfiction, newspapers, magazines, electronic texts, etc.
- Use of literature with broader appeal in schools
- Literature beyond English class





# Three Components of Knowledge

- Reading Programs
- Five elements of reading
- Reading diagnosis and intervention



# Reading Programs

- Reading Recovery
- Success for All
- Accelerated Reader



# Reading Recovery

- Begun in New Zealand by Marie Clay
- Most researched program
- Most successful program
- Some say most expensive program



# Reading Recovery Components

- Program for bottom quartile of students
- Intervene early, in first grade
- Tutors/RR Teachers are carefully trained
- Lessons
  - Reread books
  - Sentence writing
  - Introduce new book
- New program called “Early Steps” introduces phonics component



# Success For All

- Begun in 1987 (Robert Slavin and others)
- Effort to restructure high poverty elementary school
- Provide high quality early education experiences to assure school success
- “Catch them before they’re behind”
- Genuine belief all children can learn



# Success for All Components

- Cooperative learning heavily used; multiple modalities used
- Rapid pace, structured lessons, variety of activities—draws on multimedia for “hook”
- Phonetic program rooted in authentic literature
- Grouped by reading level, not grade
- 1 to 1 tutoring for struggling students, computer tutor
- SFA facilitator works with school and teachers



# Outcomes

- After both Reading Recovery and Success for All fewer children placed in special ed or retained
- The number one component for struggling students seems to be one-on-one tutoring or intervention



# Accelerated Reader

- Related to older programs (DiStar, SRA)
- Students read books at a certain level
- Students answer questions (often lower-order questions) on the computer
- Students earn points for their reading rating
- When the reading rating is sufficiently high, students go on to the next level





# Criticisms of AR

- Research shows that it can enhance fluency but not necessarily comprehension
- Program locks students in to a level, little flexibility if mis-placed
- Program does not account for how context and motivation influence students' reading skill
- Many AR books are not "real" or authentic but are written for the program; expense



# Five Elements of Reading

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Text Comprehension



# Phonemic Awareness

- The conscious knowledge that spoken language is made up of sentences, words, and sounds (phonemes)
- A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that distinguishes one word from another (44)



# Phonics

- The study of the relationships of the letters and the letter combinations in written words to the sounds they represent in spoken words. The study of phonics provides content for the development of one of the word attack skills
- Phonics instruction is generally not helpful to children beyond second grade



## ✱ Short Vowel Sounds

	<p>ǎ (<i>mad</i>)   ě (<i>hen</i>)   ĭ (<i>in</i>)   ǒ (<i>hot</i>)   ů (<i>fun</i>)</p>																		
macrons	<p>1. This section introduces the short vowel sounds shown above. Thus far we have identified five other vowel sounds. We call them "long" or glided sounds.</p> <p>We distinguish them (as in the dictionary) from other sounds by placing _____ over them.</p>																		
<p>a   ǎ   <i>mǎd</i>  e   ě   <i>hěn</i>  i   ĭ   <i>ĭn</i>  o   ǒ   <i>hǒt</i>  u   ů   <i>fůn</i></p> <p>short</p> <p>breve</p>	<p>2. The <b>breve</b>, <math>\text{˘}</math>, is a diacritical mark used to indicate a specific pronunciation of each of this second group of vowels. Its linguistic relationship to "short" can be noted in such words as "abbreviate" and "brevity." It is the custom, in phonics, to call the vowel sound whose key symbol contains a breve a <b>short</b> vowel sound.</p> <p>The vowels in the words (3) at the right represent the _____ sounds. Each key symbol (2) (long, short)</p> <p>consists of a vowel marked with a _____. Mark the vowel in each key word.</p> <table style="float: right; margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>a</td> <td>ǎ</td> <td><i>mad</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>e</td> <td>ě</td> <td><i>hen</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>i</td> <td>ĭ</td> <td><i>in</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>o</td> <td>ǒ</td> <td><i>hot</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>u</td> <td>ů</td> <td><i>fun</i></td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	a	ǎ	<i>mad</i>	e	ě	<i>hen</i>	i	ĭ	<i>in</i>	o	ǒ	<i>hot</i>	u	ů	<i>fun</i>
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short	<p>3. Because, in actuality, these sounds are not held for a shorter period of time than certain other vowel phonemes, some prefer to call them <b>unglided phonemes</b>.</p> <p>If you write "unglided" and this text gives the answer as "_____" (or vice versa), you may count your answer correct.</p>																		
<p>ǎ, ǒ, ů</p> <p>phonemes</p>	<p>4. The key symbols that identify the vowels when they represent their short sounds are: ǎ, ě, _____, _____, _____. Reading would be easier if five additional characters representing these _____ were added (letters, phonemes) to our alphabet.</p>																		

# Fluency

- Fluency is fast expressive reading.
  - Fluent: "Some children read quickly."
  - Non-fluent: "Some children...hesitate...and repeat...repeat words."
- How to improve fluency: reading aloud to students, performances, partner reading, lots of reading opportunities, modeling use and enjoyment of books, reading to younger children, make tape recordings of favorite texts, radio plays



# Vocabulary

- One of the more important and evident elements for adolescent readers
- Too much vocabulary instruction is shallow, word-and-definition learning
- Aim for thick vocabulary learning—quality over quantity. What are the essential terms?
- Students know words on a continuum:
  - never heard it
  - heard it but have no idea of meaning
  - recognize it in context as having to do with...
  - know it well
- Poverty a powerful factor: High SES 4<sup>th</sup> graders know 19000 words; Low SES know 13000 (White, Graves, & Slater 1990). Widening gap in school



# Thick Vocabulary Learning

- Employs multiple entry points into the word
- Multiple modalities where necessary
- Contextual learning
- Awareness of alternate meanings
- Use word parts—prefixes, suffixes, roots
- Take advantage of cognates where available





# Text Comprehension

- Most foundational aspect is previous knowledge
- Vocabulary involved in comprehension
- Understanding text structure can help many students
  - Comparison/Contrast
  - Cause/Effect
  - Explanation
  - Chronological Order
  - Journalistic Structure
  - Narrative



# Diagnosis, Intervention

- Formal diagnoses of disabilities will likely take place earlier; however, if you suspect a child has a genuine disability work with your special ed. department
- Helpful interventions (general):
  - Advanced vocabulary and comprehension strategies
  - Fluency work
  - Reading practice
- Four areas that could be at issue:
  - Motivation to read
  - Decoding
  - Comprehension
  - Transaction with text



# Strategies for struggling adolescent readers—watch for these!

- QAR
- Think-aloud
- Reciprocal teaching
- Summarizing
- Text structure
- Peer tutoring
- Discussion of texts

