

Essentials of Assessing, Preventing and Overcoming Reading Difficulties

By: David Kilpatrick

Book Study

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Purpose of the Chapter	To introduce the problems associated with the gap between reading research and classroom practice.
Big Ideas to Look For	What are the goals of this book? Describe the gap between reading research and classroom practice and discuss why such a gap exists. What works to prevent reading risk? What works in early intervention? What works in intervention with older students?
Terms defined	Orthographic mapping - the process students use to turn unfamiliar written words into instantly accessible "sight words". Sight Word - any word that is instantly recognized regardless of whether it is phonically regular or irregular. Sight Vocabulary - a student's pool of words that are instantly and effortlessly recognized.
Review Questions to Discuss	For how long has it been well established that phonological awareness is critical for reading? What is one likely reason that there is a gap between reading research and classroom instruction? What appears to be the most important scientific discovery that educators have not heard about?
Implications for the Classroom	If research exists that shows what works for prevention of risk and intervention when a student falls behind, why aren't we reading that research and putting those practices into place in our classrooms?

Chapter 2 - How We Teach Reading and Why It Does Not Work With Struggling Readers

Purpose of the Chapter	Many continue to teach reading based on tradition and intuition rather than using the methods that a large body of research identifies as the most effective. This chapter explores why the classic methods don't work with struggling readers.
Big Ideas to Look For	<p>What is the difference between word identification and word recognition?</p> <p>What are three classic reading approaches?</p> <p>What is the visual memory hypothesis of word reading?</p> <p>What research shows that words are not stored based on their visual properties?</p> <p>Why does the whole-word approach not help weak readers?</p> <p>What are the most critical difficulties with the three cueing systems model?</p>
Terms defined	<p>Auditory - all of the sound input we perceive.</p> <p>Phonological - a subcategory of auditory; The sounds of spoken language (words, syllables, or phonemes).</p> <p>Phonemic - a subcategory of phonological that deals with individual sounds</p> <p>Phoneme - the smallest unit of spoken language</p>
Review Questions to Discuss	<p>What does this chapter say about the term <i>research based</i>?</p> <p>Reading researchers have rejected the idea that we remember words based upon some sort of visual memory process. What research supports this change in thinking?</p> <p>From the perspective of the scientific investigation of reading, what is a major concern about the three cueing systems approach to reading?</p>
Implications for the Classroom	Many teacher education programs over the last 30 years have been out of touch on the latest research about how the brain learns to read. As a result, much of our teaching force is not familiar with what works best for prevention of risk and with intervention.

Chapter 3 - A Practical Framework For Understanding and Assessing Reading Skills

<p>Purpose of the Chapter</p>	<p>The simple view of reading can be a powerful organizing framework for understanding and assessing reading, as well as for preventing and correcting reading difficulties.</p>
<p>Big Ideas to Look For</p>	<p>What is the simple view of reading?</p> <p>When a teacher says a student struggles with reading comprehension, what is the first question to ask?</p> <p>What would the follow up question be?</p> <p>What are the four types of reading problems discussed in the text and briefly describe each one?</p> <p>What are the two components of word-level reading in the Simple View?</p> <p>What are the factors related to cipher knowledge?</p> <p>Define the list of components that influence comprehension.</p>
<p>Terms defined</p>	<p>Word -level reading- an individual's ability to accurately pronounce written words, with no presumption about prior familiarity.</p> <p>Word recognition- instant and effortless recall of familiar words. (This is a sub-category of word-level reading)</p> <p>Phonic decoding- the process of sounding out a word using letter-sound knowledge and blending those sounds together to pronounce the word.</p> <p>Cipher Knowledge - the ability to use the code of written English to pronounce words.</p> <p>Word-specific knowledge - familiarity with a given word or word part, based on past experience with that word.</p>
<p>Review Questions to Discuss</p>	<p>What is the simple view of reading?</p> <p>What appears to be the benefit of using the simple view of reading framework to guide reading assessments?</p> <p>What appears to be the benefit of using the simple view of reading framework to guide reading instruction and intervention?</p>
<p>Implications for the Classroom</p>	<p>The more we know about how word-level reading works, the more efficient and effective we can be with assessment, instruction and intervention.</p>

Chapter 4: Understanding Word Recognition Difficulties

<p>Purpose of the Chapter</p>	<p>Chapter 4 looks at the research and implications of phonic decoding and orthographic mapping. It also describes the importance of phonological awareness in every step and every element of the word-reading process.</p>
<p>Big Ideas to Look For</p>	<p>What are the specific components needed for both phonic decoding and orthographic mapping?</p> <p>What are early, basic and advanced phonological awareness skills?</p> <p>Which letters are easiest to learn?</p> <p>What are the similarities and differences between phonic decoding and orthographic mapping?</p> <p>What are the 3 levels of reading development?</p> <p>How does the orthographic mapping process work when learning to read regular and irregular words?</p> <p>What did the intervention studies with highly effective outcomes each include?</p> <p>Summarize the typical reading development of a student.</p> <p>What is the best approach to addressing fluency?</p>
<p>Terms defined</p>	<p>Orthographic Mapping - the process that readers use to store written words for instant and effortless retrieval. It is the means by which readers turn unfamiliar written words into familiar and instantly recognized sight words.</p> <p>Alphabetic principle - the insight that there is a direct connection between the sounds of spoken language and the letters in the written words.</p> <p>Self-teaching hypothesis - once children become somewhat proficient at phonic decoding, they can teach themselves new words. For example, if they know take, they can figure out make and lake if they can manipulate the first sound.</p>
<p>Review Questions to Discuss</p>	<p>What appears to be the only effective way to build the orthographic lexicon?</p> <p>What is the most common reason why children struggle in word-level reading?</p> <p>What is the significance of the phonological lexicon?</p> <p>How are written words stored for later, instantaneous retrieval?</p>
<p>Implications for the Classroom</p>	<p>The very common instructional suggestion that weak readers should learn irregular words as unanalyzed wholes is based on intuition and tradition and is not supported by any empirical research. The irony of this teaching practice is that exception words require more letter-sound and phonemic analysis than regular words, not less.</p>

Chapter 5: Understanding Reading Comprehension Difficulties

Purpose of the Chapter	Chapter 5 examines factors that contribute to reading comprehension that are not primarily related to word-level reading.
Big Ideas to Look For	<p>What skills are important for making sense of text?</p> <p>Why is specific topical background knowledge so important?</p> <p>What is important about creating a situation model?</p> <p>How does attention affect comprehension scores?</p> <p>What is an important consideration when working with ELL students?</p>
Terms defined	<p>Syntax - the order of words in sentences.</p> <p>Situation model or mental model - A mental representation of the information in the real, or an imaginary world. The reader's mental model is developed as the text progresses, and may include information derived from inferences and from background knowledge, as well as what is explicitly stated in the text itself.</p> <p>Text factors - genre, text structure, readability, text clarity, interest level of content, ect.</p> <p>Task factors - a student's instructional environment, response expectation during reading instruction, responses on classroom-oriented reading assessments, and types of responses expected on individualized reading evaluations.</p>
Review Questions to Discuss	<p>What is the most common reason that a child may do poorly in reading comprehension?</p> <p>Why would general background knowledge or specific topical knowledge be so important in understanding what is read?</p> <p>Why are good inferencing skills needed for reading comprehension?</p>
Implications for the Classroom	<p>Some have argued that background knowledge is the key to comprehension. What specific things can classroom teachers and school districts do to help build the background knowledge of our students that lack the experiences to have developed strong background knowledge?</p>

Chapter 6: Assessing Phonological Processing Skills

Purpose of the Chapter	To explore the research on phonological awareness assessments and to determine the best practices in this kind of evaluation.
Big Ideas to Look For	<p>Why should you avoid using composite scores from assessments?</p> <p>What is the goal of intervention-oriented assessment?</p> <p>Why is IQ not the most important score when looking at word-level reading?</p> <p>What is the cause for most word-level reading problems?</p> <p>Why is phoneme manipulation more important than phoneme segmentation from first grade on?</p> <p>When might phoneme reversals be important to include and why?</p>
Terms defined	<p>RAN- Rapid Automatized Naming</p> <p>WM- Working Memory</p> <p>PAST- Phonological Awareness Screening Test</p> <p>Phonological Manipulation - adding, deleting, substituting, or reversing sounds in spoken words.</p>
Review Questions to Discuss	<p>What is intervention-oriented assessment?</p> <p>Why should phoneme manipulation tasks be included in an assessment rather than just phoneme blending and segmenting?</p> <p>How might a student “cheat” on phoneme manipulation tasks?</p> <p>How can you add to an assessment to avoid this problem?</p> <p>What are the benefits of giving the PAST assessment?</p> <p>Why should we assess RAN and WM?</p>
Implications for the Classroom	Phoneme Segmentation Fluency is often the only screener given in early grades even though segmentation tasks are not sensitive enough to identify many of the students with poor phonological awareness. Universal screenings should include a phonological manipulation test. Replace PSF with PAST in screening students.

Chapter 7 - Assessing Phonics Skills

Purpose of the Chapter	To explore the research on phonics assessments and to determine the best practices in this kind of evaluation.
Big Ideas to Look For	<p>Why is it important to teach the code in an explicit way?</p> <p>Why are phonics programs by themselves not enough to consistently lead to substantial improvements in sight-word development or fluency?</p> <p>What does poor spelling often indicate?</p> <p>What kind of tasks appear to be the best way to evaluate a student's phonics skills?</p> <p>Why might nonsense words spelling tasks be easier than real-word spelling?</p> <p>What is the most common reason a student struggles in nonsense word reading?</p>
Terms defined	<p>Phonics - A system for approaching reading that focuses on the relationship between letters and sounds. Phonics helps with sounding out unfamiliar words.</p> <p>Self-teaching hypothesis - A view proposing that the process of sounding out unfamiliar words directs a student's attention to the word's spelling pattern and facilitates orthographic learning.</p> <p>Orthography- (From the Greek "straight writing") This refers to the correct spelling of words.</p>
Review Questions to Discuss	<p>What is orthographic knowledge comprised of?</p> <p>What are nonsense words?</p> <p>Poor proficiency with the cipher negatively affects which two things?</p> <p>If a student gets "stuck" in his or her progress in phonics, what needs to be addressed first, before they will make much gain in phonics?</p>
Implications for the Classroom	The research shows that for assessment in phonics, a timed screening test of nonsense words along with a criterion-referenced test on particular letter-sound combinations will help you know how to remediate low areas. We need to give Dibels NWF and a beginning and advanced decoding assessment to be able to decide how best to help a student who is weak in reading.

Chapter 8 - Assessing Word Identification and Reading Fluency

Purpose of the Chapter	To explore the research on word identification and reading fluency assessments and to determine the best practices in this kind of evaluation.
Big Ideas to Look For	<p>What are some informal indicators that a word a student reads is not in the student's sight vocabulary?</p> <p>What is one of the best tools we have available from reading-related assessments?</p> <p>What is the correlation between isolated word-level reading and reading comprehension?</p> <p>What is the largest factor that determines a child's fluency?</p> <p>What does the research say about repeated readings?</p> <p>What is the route to reading fluency?</p>
Terms defined	<p>Competitor word - a word that looks or sounds similar to the target word.</p> <p>Set for variability - The ability to correctly determine a word based upon an incorrect pronunciation of that word.</p> <p>Prosody - expressive reading, which includes timing, phrasing, emphasis, and intonation that speakers use to help convey aspects of meaning and to make their speech lively.</p>
Review Questions to Discuss	<p>What two factors can influence a student's guessing on word identification tests?</p> <p>What are two approaches to avoid the inherent confound between sight-word recognition and correctly identifying unfamiliar words in reading tests?</p> <p>What is a drawback to passage fluency tests?</p> <p>Why do timed word-reading subtests provide a better estimate of the size of a student's sight vocabulary than untimed tests?</p>
Implications for the Classroom	Becoming more fluent is associated with larger sight vocabularies. Instead of wasting valuable class time doing a variety of repeated reading techniques, spend time working on activities that promote orthographic mapping.

Chapter 9 - Assessing Reading Comprehension and Related Skills

<p>Purpose of the Chapter</p>	<p>To explore the research on reading comprehension assessments and to determine the best practices in this kind of evaluation. The focus of this chapter is on the skills that affect reading comprehension apart from word-level reading.</p>
<p>Big Ideas to Look For</p>	<p>Why is it helpful to understand the simple view of reading?</p> <p>What may cause a student to struggle in reading?</p> <p>What is best practice in reading comprehension assessment?</p> <p>What is the goal of intervention-oriented assessment for comprehension?</p> <p>For a student who displays difficulty with reading comprehension, what should you assess?</p> <p>For ELL students, what is the biggest factor affecting their reading comprehension?</p>
<p>Terms defined</p>	<p>Hyperlexic - student with good word-level reading but weak language skills.</p> <p>Mixed - student with poor word-level reading and weak language skills.</p> <p>Compensator - student with mild form of dyslexic pattern but compensates with strong language skills.</p>
<p>Review Questions to Discuss</p>	<p>Which two patterns of reading difficulties have reading comprehension difficulties that cannot simply be the result of poor word reading?</p> <p>If there is a suspicion that a student may be struggling in reading comprehension as a result of subtle language problems, what may be the best assessment option?</p> <p>For which comprehension-related skills are there limited opportunities for formal assessment?</p> <p>If a reading comprehension test relies more on word-reading skills than language skills, what is likely to happen?</p> <p>What would a student's skill profile include?</p>
<p>Implications for the Classroom</p>	<p>If a student struggles to comprehend what he reads, the first question is to ask if he can understand a story that is read to him. If so, there is likely a weakness in his word-level reading ability. If he struggles to comprehend stories that are read to him, more assessment is necessary and speech/language pathologists are the best people in most buildings to consult for next steps.</p>

Chapter 10 - Effective Approaches for Preventing Reading Difficulties

<p>Purpose of the Chapter</p>	<p>The goal of this chapter is to present the most effective, empirically validated approaches for preventing reading difficulties with a primary focus on word-level reading problems.</p>
<p>Big Ideas to Look For</p>	<p>What is the difference between components of effective reading instruction in prevention and intervention?</p> <p>How can we substantially reduce the percentage of students who display reading difficulties?</p> <p>What is a struggling reader?</p> <p>When is a student considered at-risk?</p> <p>Explain what is meant by phonemic awareness being integrated with learning letters and written words.</p> <p>What kind of results come from teaching phonics in an explicit way?</p>
<p>Terms defined</p>	<p>Explicit instruction means the teacher provides clear and precise instruction.</p> <p>Systematic instruction means that the teacher has a specific plan or sequence for introducing letter-sound relationships.</p>
<p>Review Questions to Discuss</p>	<p>What does being ready for word-level reading mean?</p> <p>What does research suggest about preventing reading difficulties in English language learners?</p> <p>What combination of teaching practices provides far greater results in word-level reading skills than any other teaching practice that has been studied?</p> <p>What is the difference between a digraph, blend and diphthong?</p> <p>Which letter names are more easily learned?</p>
<p>Implications for the Classroom</p>	<p>If we systematically teach phonological awareness to every kindergarten and first grade student, we will reduce reading problems by 50-75%. If we add systematic and explicit phonics instruction, we will have many more students ready to read. We have to move away from the three-cueing system and whole word learning because we have evidence that phonemic awareness and phonics works better.</p>

Chapter 11- Effective Approaches for Overcoming or Minimizing Reading Difficulties

Purpose of the Chapter	The goal of this chapter is to present the most effective, empirically validated approaches for correcting reading difficulties with a primary focus on word-level reading problems.
Big Ideas to Look For	<p>What should intervention efforts be based on?</p> <p>In order for students to be successful readers, what do they need?</p> <p>What percentage of elementary students would read below a basic level if the best prevention and intervention approaches were used?</p> <p>What did highly successful interventions all include?</p> <p>For interventions that were less successful, what did they not include?</p> <p>Why might a student get “stuck” in phonics?</p>
Terms defined	Treatment Resisters- students who do not respond to conventional reading interventions.
Review Questions to Discuss	<p>Of the studies that had minimal to modest intervention outcomes, what key element was most commonly missing?</p> <p>What might be a reason that repeated readings does not have a gap-closing impact on struggling readers?</p> <p>What is the best way to determine if an intervention has helped weak readers narrow or even close the gap with their typically developing peers?</p>
Implications for the Classroom	Many commercial intervention programs claim to be research based, but if they don't include all 3 of the elements of highly successful programs, they won't likely be successful at closing the gap between our least successful and most successful readers. Whatever we put into place, we need to be diligent to make sure it includes phonemic awareness training to manipulation level, explicit and systematic phonics and opportunities to practice those skills in connected texts.

Chapter 12- Case Illustrations - several case studies illustrate some of the principles and concepts from the text. They serve as clarification of how student profiles might be interpreted.

Chapter 13- Reading Difficulties and Learning Disability Identification

Purpose of the Chapter	This chapter provides some insight to evaluation teams in determination of reading disabilities.
Big Ideas to Look For	<p>Is there consensus in the research field on SLD identification? Why?</p> <p>How can most phonological awareness difficulties be remediated?</p> <p>What characteristics need to be considered when attempting to determine whether a student has a reading comprehension disability?</p> <p>What is lacking in most students who do not show progress in phonics?</p> <p>What do you need to examine if you have RTI group sizes of 8-10?</p> <p>What are three types of students who may be good candidates for having a reading disability?</p>
Terms defined	Phonological Core Deficit - A term used by researchers for problems with the phonological underpinnings of learning to read, which can be caused by genetics, the environment (inadequate early language opportunities) or both.
Review Questions to Discuss	<p>What are the two key factors that appear to be the most relevant in determining the presence of a reading disability?</p> <p>With highly effective reading interventions, the largest reading gains occurred within how many hours of instruction?</p> <p>Which students does research suggest will have a higher likelihood of being treatment resisters?</p> <p>Why might giving a student the designation of an SLD be best for their progress?</p>
Implications for the Classroom	For RTI to be effective, we must reduce the total number of struggling readers with our Tier 1 instruction. Instead of using repackaged versions of classic approaches that have not proven to work, we need to shift to scientifically validated approaches.