



Literacy Links

September, 2007
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Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

Spotlight on...

Making Instruction Systematic



In the March 2007 edition of *Literacy Links*, the spotlight section described explicit instruction and gave examples of using explicit teaching. Discussions of explicit instruction are directly linked to *systematic instruction*; you shouldn't have one without the other. There is a reason that these two topics are closely linked: research shows that early systematic instruction (especially in phonics) produces gains in reading comprehension (NRP, 2000). This makes sense; the brain is a pattern detector and connects new learning to what is known (Lyons, 2003). This is why comprehensive reading programs incorporate explicit **and systematic** instruction.

WHAT IS SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION?

Systematic instruction refers to the "what and when" or scope and sequence of instruction. Systematic instruction is the presentation of a set of specific skills and concepts in a predetermined, logical order. Skills and concepts are introduced according to a continuum beginning with simple and moving toward more complex. In contrast, incidental instruction implies that teachers follow no predetermined sequence of skills and introduce concepts in random order as the need arises (SEDL, 2006).

This is not to say reading instruction should be lineal and lock stepped. The five essential elements are certainly intertwined and follow a parallel development. There are times when incidental teaching provides powerful opportunities to explicitly show the connections of the elements. However, an entire program built on incidental teaching may run the risk of having gaps in student learning that could become problematic. This is why progress monitoring of students reading growth and systematic recursive teaching is essential (See *Links*, Nov.2006 issue).

Each of the five essential elements of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension) has a hierarchy of development. Beck gives a good example of this using phonics: "Explicit, systematic phonics instruction refers to instructional strategies for teaching phonics. The explicit part means that the relationship between letters and sounds is directly pointed out. The *systematic* part refers to presenting those relationships in a pre-established sequence. There can be variations in the sequence. The first four letters in one reading program are *a,m,t,s*; the first four letters of another program are *a,r,t,n*. In most sequences, the consonants and short vowels are presented before long vowels and vowel digraphs are introduced." (Beck, 2006).

Various instructional continuums are available that show the scope and sequence of reading development. The curriculum maps referenced below show a logical scope and sequence for each of the five essential elements. These can be used by teachers for a variety of instructional purposes:

Upcoming Events

September
21, 2007 ~

"How Can We Conceptualize Literacy Learning Difficulties in the Context of Response to Intervention (RTI): A view from Early Intervention Research and Practice" presented by Robert Schwartz, Jeff's Catering, Brewer;
Sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development-

Literacy Unit;
Contact Amy Cates
at 581-2438 for
registration
information

REMINDER:

**September 27-28,
2007 ~**

59th Annual New
England Reading
Association (NERA)
Conference, "Literacy
Learning: What
Matters", will be held
at the Augusta Civic
Center; registration
brochure for this
conference is now
available at
<http://www.nereading.org>

**October 9,10 and
12, 2007 ~**

"Literacy for Young
Learners: Shaping
Conversation within
Guided Reading
Lessons to Lift
Student Learning"
presented by well
known educator
Mary Fritz. Held at
Jeff's Catering,
Brewer; UMPI; and
USM respectively.
Sponsored by the
University of Maine
College of Education
and Human
Development—
Literacy Unit;
Contact Amy Cates
at 581-2438 for
registration
information.

- to check their own curriculum/continuums in order to better scaffold their students learning,
- after assessment to group students for appropriate instruction,
- to provide recursive learning as students move through the grade spans (see *Literacy Links*, Nov. 2006 and May-June 2007),
- to provide benchmarks at each grade level, and
- as a pacing guide for instruction.

As Beck illustrates with phonics, there is a hierarchy in reading development; as with most learning there are prerequisite skills and prior knowledge that make new learning more accessible.

The following website contains curriculum maps that show a logical scope and sequence of each of the five essential elements across the K-3 grade span. *Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities* can be found at <http://reading.ugregon.edu/appendices/maps.php>

Description of Instructional Idea...

Using "Getting the GIST" to Organize Summaries

Getting the main idea and summarizing are not new comprehension skills. The March 2006 Literacy Links described teaching students to use the GIST comprehension activity to identify the main idea (or gist) one paragraph or section at a time. This GIST activity can then be used to show students how to develop **organized and concise summaries**.

SUMMARIZING

Summarizing links all the main ideas together. To teach students to summarize, have students write each main idea as they "GET THE GIST" from a paragraph or section of a text. Then, use the framework below to demonstrate how the main ideas can be combined into one organized and concise summary. This process can be used with fiction, non-fiction, and informational text to scaffold children's thinking before discussing or writing responses.

Main Idea
Main Idea
Main Idea
Main Idea
Main Idea

Summary

Save the date:

**November 2,
2007 ~**

Linda Dorn is returning, this widely read author of professional literacy texts will present, "Providing Differentiated Instruction in a Reading and Writing Workshop" Held at Spectacular Events Center in Bangor. Sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development— Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for registration information.



As always, explanation and modeling of this lesson should be followed by opportunities for guided practice where students use the main ideas from the GIST part of the organizer to compile concise summaries of their reading with teacher support and feedback. Then students should have a chance to practice this process for summarizing independently, leading to a finished product of their understandings (synthesis).

GIST (Cunningham, 1982) is an acronym for *Generating Interactions between Schemata and Texts*. This strategy was developed to help students learn to read and write organized and concise summaries of their reading (Allen, 2004). Using GIST to compile summaries of longer texts is adapted from Klinger and Vaughn (1998) and available at www.fcrr.org. For more instructional ideas to use to teach summarizing go to **For Teachers** at this website and click on the *Student Center Activities* for your grade level. For older students, more instructional ideas for comprehending non-fiction can be found in Janet Allen's *Tools for Teaching Content Literacy* (Stenhouse, 2004).

Summary of Professional Literacy Text...

Reading and Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades, Research Based Practices.

Nell Duke teams with Susan Bennett-Armistead to provide a teacher friendly professional resource for teachers to refer to again and again when integrating informational text in their literacy teaching. In Reading and Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades, they explain why and show us how to do this well. Chapter 1 tells us why and Chapter 2 provides a research-based framework to do this. In Chapters 3 to 8 the authors detail how to implement this framework including content area instruction and the classroom environment. The last two chapters extend incorporating informational text beyond the components of the literacy framework. From their practical experiences, in Chapter 9 they give us a head's up to challenges that may occur when teaching literacy with informational text. Chapter 10 gives us suggestions for professional development using this text. The authors site professional text of colleagues (Bamford and Kristo, Parkes and others) and resources for locating quality nonfiction and informational texts to be used as we expand our teaching of literacy to include more non-fiction.

Reading & Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades, Research-Based Practice by Nell K. Duke, Ed.d and V. Susan Bennett-Armistead was published in 2003 by Scholastic (Theory and Practice) and the ISBN is 0-439-53123-3.

Children's Literature Title...

An Egg is Quiet

Written by Dianna Aston and illustrated by Sylvia Long

School librarians who highly recommend and purchase An Egg is Quiet, agree with the end page synopsis:

"Award winning artist Sylvia Long and up and coming author Dianna Aston have teamed up to create this gorgeous and informative introduction to eggs. From tiny hummingbird eggs to giant ostrich eggs, oval ladybug eggs to tubular dogfish eggs, gooey frog eggs to fossilized dinosaur eggs, it magnificently captures the incredible variety of eggs and celebrates their beauty and wonder. The evocative text is sure to inspire lively questions and

“The difference between the right word and nearly the right word is the same as that between lightning and lightning bug.”

Mark Twain



observations. Yet while poetic in voice and elegant in design, the book introduces children to more than 60 egg types and an interesting array of egg facts. A tender and fascinating guide that is equally at home being read to a child on a parent's lap as in a classroom reading circle.”

An Egg is Quiet is on the Chickadee Award 2007-2008 Book List. Published by Chronicle Books in 2006. The ISBN is 0-8118-4428-5

If you like this book, check out Aston's and Long's newest non-fiction: *A Seed Is Sleepy* (Feb. 2007) ISBN 0-8118-5500-1. The drawings are once again vivid and the text is lyrical.

News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Reading First is in the process of setting up **The Maine Literacy Leaders' Network** as initiated with the first *Dine and Discuss* meetings held in May of 2007. The initial dates for the 2007-08 series will be November 8th in the Portland area and November 15th in the Bangor area. Please be looking for more information concerning these dates and the Literacy Leaders' Network; and pass the word. Anyone interested in joining the group, or in need of updating contact information, should e-mail leeann.larsen@maine.gov

Check it out...

The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project.

“The Chickadee Award is a picture book award program for children in kindergarten through fourth grade. This award is in its fourth year, and will be given annually to one of ten picture books nominated by a committee of teachers, librarians, and early literacy professionals, with the winner chosen by Maine school children. The purpose of this award is to encourage children to develop an appreciation for excellence in writing and illustration that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. The evaluation process leading up to voting will help students understand and interpret books and help them to express and support their judgment about text and pictures with convincing evidence. The Maine Association of School Libraries is providing financial support for this project” (Chickadee Award, press release, 2007). For more information, visit the chickadee website at www.chickadeeaward.org

Newsletter Archives

There are several earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available on the Maine Reading First website at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

Edition	Spotlight Topic
March, 2005	Maine Reading First
April, 2005	Maine Reading First Course
May, 2005	Reading Fluency
June, 2005	Vocabulary
September, 2005	Phonemic Awareness
October, 2005	Phonics
November, 2005	Comprehension
December, 2005/January, 2006	DIBELS
February, 2006	Literacy Centers
March, 2006	Interactive Read Aloud

April, 2006	Nonfiction
May, 2006	Word Walls
June, 2006	Classroom Design
September, 2006	Shared Reading
October, 2006	Automaticity
November, 2006	Using Assessment to Guide Instruction
December, 2006	Deepening Comprehension
January, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 1)
February, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 2)
March, 2007	Making Instruction Explicit
April, 2007	Motivation and Engagement
May and June, 2007	Grouping for Instruction



For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email leann.larsen@maine.gov

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

The professional development opportunities and materials are listed in *Literacy Links* for informational purposes only and are not necessarily endorsed by the Maine Department of Education's Maine Reading First Initiative.