The Early Reading Accelerators’ Quick Start Guide

Literacy opens the doors to learn about ourselves and the world, to become changemakers in our communities, and to pursue our dreams. This begins with ensuring that each child learns how to read.

What are the Early Reading Accelerators?

Reading science emphasizes two critical pieces of early reading instruction: systematically securing foundational skills and building knowledge and vocabulary. These “Early Reading Accelerators” are essential content that all readers need access to in order to become proficient readers, and any effective classroom instruction or materials will intentionally amplify these two areas. While each student and their experiences are unique, we can accelerate the development of reading proficiency for all students by implementing these practices strategically.

Despite this settled science, too many students are denied strong instruction with these key, research-based elements. How do we ensure that we are teaching Early Reading Accelerators’ content to all students, while also centering students whose academic needs are not being met by school?

Making the Early Reading Accelerators an Equitable Practice

Reading science has shown us what needs to be amplified in early reading, but for this practice to be equitable for students, we must also address the how.

Many students need support with reading, but students of color, students from families experiencing poverty, and English learners are less likely to have access to resources that facilitate reading success, including: effective instructional practices, appropriate individualized supports, or teachers and materials that reflect their own identities. To implement the Early Reading Accelerators equitably, we also must consider student supports, culturally relevant content and practices, and aligned instructional materials. This means that we have a deep knowledge of the accelerators (foundational skills and building knowledge & vocabulary), and instruct in ways and with content that value students’ backgrounds, languages, cultures, points of view, knowledge, and skills.

---

2. https://achievethecore.org/page/2468/research-supporting-shift-3-building-knowl
Implementing the Early Reading Accelerators

The table below highlights some of the best practices that support implementation of the Early Reading Accelerators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational Skills*</th>
<th>Building Knowledge &amp; Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students must learn how letters, sounds, words, and sentences work, and also learn to decode/encode.</td>
<td>Students build knowledge and vocabulary through content-rich, topically connected texts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explicit, research-based instruction and practice following a clear scope & sequence of skills including:**

- **Print Concepts**: Ensure each child knows how print and books work.
- **Phonological Awareness**: Recognize and identify the sounds of spoken language.
- **Phonics & Word Recognition**: Explicitly teach the sound and spelling patterns that allow students to decode and encode words.
- **Fluency**: Support students as they read accurately and with appropriate rate and expression, including practice with decodable texts based on taught skills.

*Research-based practices for teaching reading and writing in English; these practices may need to be adjusted for a dual-language setting based on the needs of the language of instruction.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read Aloud</th>
<th>Text Sets</th>
<th>Book Baskets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(content-rich, complex texts read and reread aloud)</td>
<td>(collections of texts and resources on a topic, representing a range of complexity levels)</td>
<td>(independent/choice reading texts organized by topic, not levels)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When engaging in text-based work:

- Use discussion and writing to make meaning and showcase knowledge.
- Take a text-first approach (not a standards- or skills-first approach) by using the big ideas and complexities of each text to drive your standards-aligned questions, tasks, and supports.
- Attend to text-based academic and domain-specific vocabulary.
# Key Considerations for Implementation of the Early Reading Accelerators

These three elements must work together to support effective and equitable implementation of the Early Reading Accelerators’ content. Existing materials, structures, and practices may already encompass the outlined elements, but in most cases, will need work so that both instructional content and practice meet these goals.

## Student Supports

Ensure all students have the support they need to engage in the work of the Early Reading Accelerators by choosing appropriate scaffolds based on data gathered through regular formative assessment practices.

Including:
- Supports for students, including grouping structures, are based on students’ needs and are flexible. Groups do not remain static or serve to keep students in a *cycle of below grade-level texts* without a plan for acceleration.
- Flexible, needs-based, targeted whole-class and *small-group foundational skills instruction* and practice.
- *Supports* for all students to engage in lessons utilizing read-aloud with complex texts and related grade-level work.
- *Supports* for English learners, including leveraging students’ *home language* and connections between and across to the language of instruction.

## Culturally Relevant Instructional Practices

Use of culturally relevant instructional practices and content that are responsive to and respect the value of all students’ backgrounds, languages, cultures, points of view, knowledge, and skills.

Including:
- Exploring our mindsets, expectations, attitudes, and *biases* about students - particularly students who are of color, live in families experiencing poverty, and/or are learning English - so we can ensure we hold positive views of student capabilities and high expectations for all students.
- Engaging in *teaching* that “emphasizes communal orientation [and is] focused on relationships, cognitive scaffolding, and critical social awareness.”
- Ensuring that students have opportunities to see themselves and their experiences *positively affirmed* in texts.
- Ensuring that texts and topics *represent many diverse perspectives and identities* - specifically centering texts and topics that reflect the languages, perspectives, and histories of students, which must include historically marginalized populations (both *mirrors and windows*).

## Aligned Instructional Materials

Use of instructional materials that are aligned to the work of the Early Reading Accelerators (and college- and career-ready *Shifts* and grade-level standards).

Including:
- Instructional materials that support the *acquisition of foundational skills* through a clear scope and sequence of skills and *research-based methods* for instruction and practice.
- Instructional materials that support the *building of knowledge and vocabulary* through read-aloud of complex text *and* topic-based volume of reading for all students.

Note: Along with being aligned, instructional materials need to support all students to engage in grade-level work (see Student Supports) and use culturally relevant instructional practices and content (see Culturally Relevant Instructional Practices).

---

*SAP is actively seeking feedback on this resource at info@studentsachieve.net.*

All content linked to within this resource was free for use when this resource was published in August 2020. Over time, the organizations that manage that external content may move or remove it or change the permissions. If the content is no longer available, please email info@studentsachieve.net.

---