



Elements of Explicit Instruction for Core Reading Curriculum Review

The purpose of this document is to outline the 16 elements of explicit instruction. Individuals leading core reading curriculum review processes will want to ensure review team members understand the elements of explicit instruction and are able to discern the extent with which the elements exist in the instructional routines written in various core reading curriculum program teacher guides.

Author: Archer and Hughes, pp 2-3, 2011 with examples supplied by MIBLSI

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Elements of Explicit Instruction

Focus instruction on critical content:

In the context of a core reading curriculum review, the emphasis needs to be on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension since these skills are predictive of reading outcomes.

Core reading programs always include too many skills. A district should prioritize the Big Ideas of Reading and perhaps writing portions of the core reading curriculum.

Sequence skills logically:

Teach easier skills before more difficult skills: teach consonants and short vowel sounds before long vowel sounds.

Prioritize the teaching of high-utility skills (skills used more frequently) than less useful skills: letters s, m, t, a should be taught right away since they appear in many words before letters like q, w, x, z.

Ensure there are opportunities for student to master pre-requisite skills before teaching the skill itself: students can accurately produce the sounds /a/, /m/, /s/, and have practice blending two of those sounds together before having them blend a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) word.

Separate skills and strategies that are similar and might be confusing to students: separate the teaching of /a/ and /e/ since those sounds are difficult for students to distinguish.



Break down complex skills and strategies into smaller instructional units:

Teach in small steps.

Segment complex skills into smaller instructional units of new material reduces cognitive overload, processing demands, and working memory. Once the skills are mastered, they are practiced as a whole:

Example: Phonics Decoding Learning Progression

1. Associating letters and sounds.
2. Blending sounds into words.
3. Reading words to build fluency.
4. Segmenting and spelling words.
5. Reading decodable text containing words with letter/sound associations.

Design organized and focused lessons:

Lessons are on-topic, well-sequenced, and avoid digressions (additional stories or examples that are not relevant to the skills that might take student's attention away from the learning).

Begin lesson with a clear statement of the lesson's goals and your expectations:

Teacher communicates to students what is to be learned and why it is important.

Review prior skills and knowledge before beginning instruction:

Provide a review of relevant information.

Verify students have the prerequisite skills and knowledge to learn the skill being taught in the lesson.

Example: Before introducing students to the decodable reader, there is a pre-correct provided to the teacher stating the students must be able to read specific words before they begin to read those words in connected text. An instructional routine is provided that leads the students in practicing reading the target words.

Provide step-by-step demonstrations:

Model the skill (this could include clarifying the decision-making processes needed to complete a task or procedure by engaging in a "think aloud" as the teacher performs the skill).

Clearly demonstrate the target skill to show students proficient performance.



Use clear and concise language:

Use consistent, unambiguous wording and terminology (“Let’s practice saying the sounds in the words that we will be reading. Look at the letters in Line 1. Say the sounds” /ssss/, /mmm/, /aaa/, /t/”)

Provide an adequate range of examples and non-examples:

Examples and non-examples allow the teacher to establish the boundaries of when and when not to apply a skill, strategy, concept, or rule. A wide range of examples are necessary. Presenting non-examples reduces the possibility a student will use the skill inappropriately.

Example: Learning a-e and applying the rule of “e” making the letter “a” say its name requires many examples of a-e words but also should include words without “e” at the end. Students will know to distinguish when “a” says its name versus its sound.

Provide guided and supported practice:

Practice opportunities during the lesson builds student confidence. The teacher needs to regulate the difficulty of the practice opportunities and guides them in demonstrating the skill. When students demonstrate success, the skill / task difficulty increases and teacher guidance decreases.

Require frequent responses:

Have students respond frequently using the following verbal responses:

Verbal Response Options:

Choral - use when answers are the same; focusing on recall and rehearsal of sounds / words, etc.; quick review of information

Partners - use when responding to a question or a task; opportunity to have students teaching information to a partner (rapid reading of new words students just read); studying with a partner

Individual – least desirable practice but there are times to make this a more acceptable practice (ask question and have students share answers with partners first before calling on individual students to provide the answer or ask question first and then call on individual students)

Discussion – provide a well-designed question or prompt and have students discuss the answers. Sentence steps can be provided to scaffold student responses.



Monitor student performance closely:

Carefully watch and listen to students' responses so the teacher can verify their level of understanding of the information.

Provides opportunities for students to elaborate on their responses and for the teacher to check understanding.

Provide immediate affirmative and corrective feedback:

Follow-up on students' responses as quickly as possible.

Immediate feedback to students about the accuracy of their responses helps ensure high rates of success and reduces the likelihood of practicing errors.

Example: Correcting Sound Errors

Model (I do it): tell the students the correct response "That sound is /aaa/."

Test (You do it): have students repeat the correct response "What sound?"

Delayed Test: test the item / skill that was incorrect at a later time in the lesson

Deliver the lesson at a brisk pace:

Use a rate of presentation that is brisk but includes a reasonable amount of time for students' thinking / processing, especially when they are learning new material.

The desired pace is neither so slow that students get bored nor so quick that they cannot keep up.

Help students organize knowledge:

Because students struggle to see how some skills and concepts fit together, it is important to use teaching techniques that make the connections more apparent.

Well-organized and connected information makes it easier for students to retrieve information and facilitate the information with new material.

Provide distributed and cumulative practice:

Distributed practice refers to multiple opportunities to practice a skill over time

Cumulative practice is a way to provide distributed practice by including practice opportunities that address both previously and newly acquired skills.

Provide students with multiple practice attempts to help information move from short-term memory to long-term memory.



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