

Florida Center for Reading Research

REACH System

What is the REACH System?

The *REACH System*, published by SRA, is a comprehensive reading, writing, and oral language intervention program for students in grades 4 through 8 who are reading below grade level. It is also appropriate for high school students who are functioning below the 8th grade level in reading. *REACH* is a compilation of programs published by SRA: Corrective Reading, Reasoning and Writing, Spelling Through Morphographs, and High Noon Chapter Books. The System Guide integrates these programs to present the essential components of reading instruction and also provides supplemental materials. The goals of the program are for students to accelerate in reading and language arts in order to successfully read on grade level. The classroom teacher delivers whole class instruction in a four period block of time, or a minimum of 2 1/2 to 3 hours, though this schedule can be customized as needed for shorter periods of time.

The *REACH System* is cumulative, where new learning is practiced to mastery and the instructional sequence is clearly delineated. The *REACH System* utilizes science and social studies content to teach students to read and write, helping students learn content area knowledge and apply concepts critical for later success in all content areas. Placement procedures from the three programs were adapted so that the *REACH System* requires only one placement test. Based on performance on the Placement Test, students will begin in one of four system plans; there are two plans for grades 4 through 6, and two plans for grades 6 through 8.

Teacher materials include a Scheduling Section, which contains daily lesson plan charts to guide the teacher in setting goals for students for each semester and details how to use the components on a daily basis. Other materials include the System Guide, Presentation Books, Student Books, Workbooks, Textbooks, and Blackline Masters. The Progress Monitoring section of the System Guide helps the teacher evaluate students using the testing components and the electronic progress monitoring program, a system for monitoring individual and group mastery levels on the daily, weekly, and monthly mastery checks and tests. Benchmark Tests are special mastery tests that each student must pass in order to continue with other students in the plan. A chart at the end of this section details how the levels of the three programs and the supplemental chapter books are integrated.

Corrective Reading

For an overview of the Corrective Reading component of the *REACH System*, please see: http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/PDF/corrective_reading_final.pdf.

Reasoning & Writing

Reasoning and Writing is a whole-class, direct instruction program that teaches higher-order thinking skills organized in tracks. A track is an ongoing development of a particular topic, such as classification. Within each 30-45 minute lesson, work from 3 to 5 tracks is presented. Students may work continuously on one skill for part of 20 or 30 lessons. In this continuous development of skills, review becomes automatic. Reasoning and Writing is built on five levels of instruction, B-F. Recommendations for teaching the program include tips for classroom arrangement, teaching instructions, presentation

scripts, pacing suggestions, board work directions, and basic rules for managing student writing activities. Scaffolding and review are built in at every level and assessments occur approximately every ten lessons. If more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of students fail to master the material, 'remedies' or re-teaching lessons are recommended.

Level B (70 lessons), designed for students who read and write on a beginning second-grade level, focuses on laying a solid conceptual foundation for later writing and analysis of language and preparing students for reading, writing and reasoning in content areas. Level B presents the following skills: story grammar, sequencing and spatial orientation, classification, following and writing instructions, constructing deductions and drawing conclusions, clarity, time, rate, and distance, perspectives, and writing. The central focus of each lesson is a story, which integrates the learned skills and teaches story structure. Thirty-five minutes of instruction 2 to 5 periods per week is recommended.

Level C (110 lessons), for students who read on at least a second grade level, focuses on writing including mechanical skills, spelling, punctuation, knowledge of sentence structure, and organization. Skills, introduced and practiced extensively throughout the program, are subject-predicate, grammar, punctuation, reporting, organization, editing, following directions, copying rate, and spelling accuracy. A 40-minute time period is recommended 3 to 4 days per week for this level.

Level D (110 lessons), for students who read on at least a fourth-grade level, have completed Level C, or who pass the placement criteria from the *REACH System*, has its principal focus on expository writing. Most of the writing assignments involve examining a source of information, identifying problems of accuracy, specificity or clarity, and writing explanations of problems. The skills introduced include narrative writing, figures and maps, statements and claims, subject-predicate, grammar, punctuation, copying, and paragraph writing. Forty-five minutes of instruction 3 to 4 times per week is recommended for this level.

Level E (70 lessons) is for students who read on at least a fourth-grade level, have completed Level D, or who pass the placement criteria from the *REACH System*. This level of Reasoning and Writing focuses on higher-order thinking skills through emphasis on alternative explanations, parallelism, and general versus specific statements, as well as developing specific skills in usage, grammar, identifying problems with arguments, and following particular formats for expressing ideas. Forty-five minutes are recommended for either 2 to 3 lessons per week in a year, or daily for a semester.

Level F (100 lessons) is for students able to read on a fourth-grade level, have completed Level E, or meet placement test criteria from the *REACH System*. This level emphasizes higher-order thinking with recurring focus on alternative explanations, parallelism, general versus specific statements, and the relationship between a large population and a sample of members. Specific skills in usage, grammar, identifying problems with arguments, and following particular formats for expressing ideas are also developed. Forty-five minute lessons may be presented daily for a semester or 2 to 3 times per week for a year.

Spelling Through Morphographs

Spelling Through Morphographs contains a 140 lesson spelling sequence that uses direct instruction to teach students about 600 morphemes and three rules for connecting them to spell approximately 12,000 words. The morphographs in the program were selected based on frequency of occurrence in student writing and usefulness in generating new words. Each whole-group lesson lasts between 20 and 30

minutes. Materials consist of 2 Teacher Presentation Books, Book 1 for Lessons 1-70, and Book 2 for Lessons 71-140, a Teacher's Guide, and a Student Workbook. Additional blackline masters that provide homework/practice and crossword puzzle reviews are located in the back of the Teacher Presentation Book. Spelling Sequence 1, found in the *REACH* System Guide, teaches preskills for Spelling Through Morphographs, and Spelling Sequence 2, also in the guide, reviews the most important rules for connecting morphographs after Spelling Through Morphographs is completed.

High Noon Chapter Books

High Noon Books are 19 5" X 7" chapter books, written for upper elementary and middle school students who are reading below grade level. In the *REACH System*, each set of books is used to supplement a specific level of Corrective Reading. Students in Decoding B1 use a set of four 'Sound Out' books that provide practice in decoding one-syllable words with short and long vowels. Decoding B2 is supplemented with five first-grade level books in the "Tom and Ricky Mystery Series". Decoding C1 uses the second-grade level "Trailblazer Series", and Decoding C2 advances to the third-grade level, "High Adventures".

The *REACH System* Guide provides scripted teacher instructions for each set of books, called Activity One, Two, Three, and Four. Students are placed into teams with each team reading a different book, and students are instructed to read the stories aloud by taking turns reading two sentences at a time. At the end of each chapter, the teacher uses a game format to ask the teams informational questions about what they have read. In Activity Two, Story Grammar is also introduced and students are taught to discuss characters and the problems they encounter. In Activity Three, students are asked to write about the book's title, author, characters, and problems encountered by the characters. By Activity Four, the students write a paragraph describing the main characters' attempts to solve problems.

Component	The REACH System Overview						
Corrective Reading Decoding Levels	A	B1	B2	C1	C2		
Corrective Reading Comprehension Levels		A	B1	B2	C		
Reasoning and Writing Levels		B	C	C	D	E	F
Spelling Through Morphographs Levels		Spelling Sequence 1		Lessons 1-70	Lessons 71-140	Spelling Sequence 2	
High Noon Chapter Books Series		Activity One	Activity Two	Activity Three	Activity Four		

How is the REACH System aligned with Reading First?

In the *REACH System*, instruction is clearly linked within, as well as across the five components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), and lessons are built on previously taught information, from simple to complex. Another important element that is beneficial to struggling readers is the cumulative nature of the scaffolded practice embedded in the program. The instructional routine throughout all components begins with teacher modeling of each new skill or strategy, guided practice, student practice, and frequent progress monitoring checks to affirm mastery.

Phonemic Awareness, covering the essential skills of beginning reading, is taught in Levels A, B1, and B2 of Corrective Reading Decoding, and phonics instruction is systematic and explicit. Only frequent, highly regular letter-sound relationships are taught. Segmenting and blending previously learned sounds are included in each lesson. Letter-sound correspondences are taught to mastery and reviewed frequently. Once letter sounds have been mastered, they are immediately applied to reading words, sentences, and text (Decoding strand, levels A, B1, B2). Decodable text is provided for practice of applying skills with phonic elements and there is an emphasis on reading multisyllabic words. Phonics instruction is expanded in the Spelling Through Morphographs component of the program. Morphology, information about the meaning, pronunciation, and part of speech of words gained from knowledge of prefixes, roots, and suffixes, provides students with strategies for effectively dealing with new, long words (Cunningham, 1998). Spelling Through Morphographs extends phonics instruction to include this kind of word study that helps readers recognize words more efficiently.

Fluency instruction is addressed in the Group Reading and Reading Checkout parts of each lesson (Decoding strand, levels B1 [beginning at lesson 7], B2, C). The research-based strategy, partner reading, is utilized during the Reading Checkout section. The teacher models prosody and immediate feedback is given to students in the form of a formal correction procedure. Fluency goals are included and require students to meet a precise criterion for rate and accuracy. In particular, Decoding strand level A requires students to master reading 60 words per minute (wpm) with 90% accuracy, level B1 requires reading of 90 wpm with 98% accuracy, level B2 requires reading 120 wpm with 98% accuracy, and level C requires reading 150 wpm with 98% accuracy.

Vocabulary instruction in the Corrective Reading component is addressed daily and there are ample practice activities for both speaking and listening vocabulary. Oral language activities are part of daily instruction in all components of the *REACH System*: students listen to the teacher read, practice reading at their independent levels, and constantly review previously introduced words. Both informational and narrative texts are utilized and students have multiple opportunities to read text both in the class setting and independently. The Spelling Through Morphographs component provides extensive activities for developing word knowledge through morphemic analysis and word study.

Comprehension instruction provides many opportunities for students to engage in discussions relating to the meaning of text before, during, and after reading in the Corrective Reading component, the Reasoning and Writing component, and the High Noon Chapter Books. Detailed lessons require teachers to model, guide, and scaffold instruction, while explicitly directing students to monitor their comprehension. Students are provided opportunities to read both narrative and expository text, to monitor their understanding, to activate background knowledge, to utilize main idea strategies, to discuss story elements, to answer questions, to use graphic organizers, and to summarize text.

The initial training for the *REACH System* involves 2-day program specific sessions. One full day is provided for the Corrective Reading program, one half-day for Reasoning and Writing, and one half-day for Spelling Through Morphographs. These trainings include an overview of the materials, training on teaching strategies and techniques for each step of the lesson plan, and instruction on how to apply researched “best practices” in the daily instructional plan. Administrators are trained in a half-day session geared specifically toward program implementation, materials overview, background on the program philosophy, and how current “best practices” research is reflected in the instructional design. A full day of overview, design, and curriculum integration is provided for other district personnel and support staff such as coaches and curriculum coordinators. Another full day is available for new teachers (hired after the beginning of the school year). On-going support is customized depending on the needs of each particular situation and at the request of the district or building level administrators. In the first year of implementation, support is provided in up to three visits, the second year, two visits, and the third year, one visit. This support may include in-class demonstrations of lessons for grade level groups of teachers, individualized, side-by-side coaching sessions, and/or support and feedback on daily lesson delivery. Consultants work with a district to train a core of Reading Coaches to facilitate effective program implementation and support for individual classroom teachers. Additional support is provided through a set of six videotapes covering direct instruction, following scripted lessons, using signals, correcting errors effectively, assessing student progress, and managing the classroom.

Research Support for the REACH System

In 2004, Bonnie Grossen reported on a study conducted at Goethe Middle School in Sacramento, California. The purpose of this experiment was to test the effectiveness of two components of the *REACH System*, Corrective Reading and Reasoning and



Writing, which all students received daily over a period of two years. Eighty-seven percent of the students at Goethe Middle School received free or reduced lunch and the average reading score across grade levels fell between the sixth and the eighth percentile. All students were administered the Multilevel Academic Survey Test (MAST) as a pre and post-test measure. MAST results showed that in both the first and second year of the experiment, students showed a two-year gain for one year of instruction. Although this is impressive progress, this study design (no control group) makes it impossible to attribute these specific reading improvements to use of these components of the Reach System.

Another study of the Spelling Through Morphographs component of the *REACH System*, that also did not involve a control group, was conducted in Australia in 1981. 132 students in four different classrooms used the program for 35 minutes a day for 25 weeks, completing all 140 lessons. Three classes were fourth year students who had an average spelling age of 9 years 7 months as determined by the Schonell Graded Word Spelling Test administered at pre-test. One class of sixth year remedial students had an average spelling age of 10 years 2 months on the Schonell Graded Word Spelling Test at pretest. At post-test both the regular and the remedial students' spelling gains, as measured by the Schonell Graded Word Spelling Test, were greater than would be normally expected. The students in the regular 4th year classes gained an average of fifteen months Spelling Age and the students in the remedial class gained an average of eleven months Spelling Age, which is greater than what would be expected in the eight-month period of the intervention. Although the students in this study showed accelerated progress in the development of spelling skill, we cannot determine for

certain that this progress was specifically the result of experience with the morphographic spelling program because there was no control for the other aspects of the students' educational experience.

In conclusion, the instructional content and design of the *REACH System* is consistent with scientifically based reading research. However, whereas the elements of the system have produced student reading growth in reading and spelling in previous studies, in the absence of control groups it is unclear whether this growth can be ascribed to the components of the *REACH System*. For example, students' growth may plausibly be the result of teacher and school level factors, students' maturation, and/or motivational features. There is, however, a reasonable level of empirical support for one of its components, Corrective Reading (http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/PDF/corrective_reading_final.pdf). To date, no studies have evaluated the effectiveness of the Reach program as a whole.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *REACH*:

- Lessons are explicit and systematic.
- Scaffolding and cumulative review are prominent.
- The System Guide provides a clear plan for integrating instruction across the program's four components.
- Teacher resources and training are readily available to help the teacher understand the rationale for the instructional approach.
- Spelling, writing, oral language, motivation, and listening comprehension are addressed.
- Students are repeatedly exposed to vocabulary in many contexts.

Weaknesses of *REACH*:

- Opportunities for generating questions to improve engagement with text are not evident.
- Opportunities for flexible grouping are limited.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement the REACH System?

Alachua	352-955-7880
Hernando	352-797-7001
Seminole	407-320-0006
Orange	407-317-3202

For More Information

<http://www.sraonline.com/index.php/home/curriculumsolutions/di/reachsystem/1204>

References

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

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