

Selecting a Textbook

Selecting the best textbook for a beginning reading class can be daunting. Although there are a plethora of textbooks available, few are comprehensive or sufficiently elucidate all aspects of beginning reading. Therefore, most classes will require a combination of textbooks and research articles to expose teacher candidates to the most important facets of teaching reading and the most current research. Since this course emphasizes teaching all students to read, including those who struggle to learn to read, making a selection of a text even more challenging.

The recent report, entitled *What Education Schools Aren't Teaching About Reading and What Elementary Teachers Aren't Learning*, by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ, 2006) analyzed the textbooks used in reading education courses and concluded that "The quality of almost all the reading texts is poor. Their content includes little to no hard science and in far too many cases the content is inaccurate and misleading" (p.33). This conclusion arrived after examining 226 textbooks by three 'literacy experts' as to whether the textbook is acceptable either as core or as supplemental, non-acceptable as core or as supplemental, or not relevant.

In a recent study by Joshi et al (), five well-known reading textbooks publishers were contacted and asked for the titles and authors of their best-selling books in reading education. A total of seventeen textbooks were selected and examined for the content of the books. Two of the co-authors independently examined three items: (1) whether *at least* the five components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) were included in the textbook; (2) whether the definitions provided in the text matched that of the NRP definition; and (3) the amount covered in the text. The amount covered in the text was computed by dividing the number of pages devoted to the five components of reading recommended by NRP by the total number of pages of the text excluding the references, appendices, and glossaries and multiplying by 100 to obtain the percentage of the content covered.

The analyses of the above three items showed that only 13 of the 17 'best-selling' books included all the five components recommended by the NRP and only 10 textbooks had correctly defined the five components. The percentage of materials covered ranged

from 60 to 4. Some noteworthy findings were that four textbooks did not cover the topics of phonemic awareness and phonics, considered basic building blocks of literacy acquisition. One of the textbooks adopted by 84 universities devoted only 10% of the entire volume to the five components of reading and another textbook adopted by 91 universities did not cover phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. Nine textbooks devoted only 1/3 of the textbook to the five components.

To assist teacher educators in selecting the best book for the course being taught, the attached form has been created. Although not all aspects of reading are addressed in this form, the knowledge most critical for beginning teachers to master is emphasized. The configuration recording sheet for scientifically-based reading research was used as a guide (Reschly et al., in press).

References

- Joshi, M. R., Binks, E., & Hougen, M. (in press) The Role of Teacher Education Programs in Preparing Teachers for Implementing Evidence-Based Reading Practices. In: Rosenfield, S., & Berninger, V. (Eds.) (in progress) Handbook on implementing evidence based academic interventions. Oxford University Press.
- Reschly, D., Smartt, S., Oliver, R., & Holdheide, L. (in press). Innovation Configurations to Improve the Availability of Highly Qualified Teachers for Students with Disabilities and At Risk Characteristics.
- Walsh, K., Glaser, D., & Wilcox, D. D. (2006). What education schools aren't teaching about reading and what elementary teachers aren't learning. National Council on Teacher Quality.

RUBRIC FOR EVALUATING TEXTBOOKS
Focus on Teaching Beginning Reading, Grades K-3

Instructions:

Under each descriptor of the component, place a 0, 1, 2, or 3 to indicate at which level the specified component is addressed. Descriptors and /or examples are bulleted below each of the components.

Note that it is unlikely that any textbook will receive a perfect score. However, completing an examination such as this will indicate which components will need to be addressed through the use of supplemental materials. Also, not all classes need to address all the components. However, as the program aligns all the reading courses, it is important to ensure that all components are addressed at some point during the reading program.

Scoring:

- 0 = No evidence that the component is included in the text.
- 1 = Textbook mentions the component but there is no in-depth coverage. Not all the bulleted items are discussed, and non-research-based practices are included. Some definitions are inaccurate or incomplete, there are limited resources, and insufficient opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the component.
- 2 = Textbook addresses the component in some depth. The definitions are accurate. There are limited suggestions for application and not all bulleted items are addressed.
- 3 = Textbook addresses the component accurately, in-depth, and provides suggestions for application and evaluation of understanding. The text is clear, contains recent research, and provides sufficient detail so that the teacher candidate can demonstrate knowledge of how to implement a comprehensive beginning reading program. Resources and supplemental materials address the components and are useful to the beginning teacher.

Essential Component	Accurate definitions/ Current research	Depth of coverage (amount & quality)	Resources, appendices, Supplemental materials	Application & Evaluation Opportunities	Total of Row
Oral language development -listening comprehension -vocabulary development -speech sounds -sentence structure -retelling -oral questions -questioning strategies					
Phonological Awareness -rhyming & alliteration -sentence segmenting -syllable segmenting -onset-rime -phonemic awareness -relationship to reading					
Phonemic awareness -speech sounds -early indicators of risk -detect, segment, blend, manipulate phonemes -steps of PA development (rhyming, alliteration, etc.) -activities for teaching (Elkonin boxes, say it & move it, etc.)					
Phonics -sound/letter correspondence -phoneme/grapheme correspondence -Alphabetic Principle -blending, decoding, encoding -syllable types -prefixes, suffixes, base words -nonsense words (used for assessment) -word analysis -multi-syllabic words					
Fluency -rate, accuracy, prosody					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -relation to comprehension -fluency training -partner reading -measurable goals -progress monitoring 					
<p>Comprehension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -before, during, & after reading strategies -questioning strategies -summarize, predict, retell -metacognitive strategies -narrative text & story schema -types of expository text -text structure -graphic organizers -think, pair, share -directed reading activity -cloze procedures -fact & opinion -author's purpose -think alouds 					
<p>Features of Effective Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -explicit instruction with modeling -systematic instruction with scaffolding -sequential teaching of skills -pacing -multiple opportunities to practice/respond -progress monitoring -selection of text -grouping for instruction 					
<p>Motivating Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -voluntary reading -classroom libraries -teacher modeling enthusiasm -involving parents 					
<p>Assessments & Use of Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -screening -diagnostic 					

-progress monitoring -outcomes -analysis of data -using data to design instruction -TPRI -informal reading inventories -fluency norms					
Spelling -stages of spelling development -teaching spelling -spelling & reading					
Effective instruction for all students -English Language Learners -gifted & talented -dyslexia & other reading disabilities -economically disadvantaged					
SBRR/NCLB/IDEA/RTI -National Reading Panel Report -scientifically based research -NCLB law -IDEA -Response to Intervention					
State Standards -aligned with TEKS -aligned with EC-4 State teacher standards					
Other					
Column subtotals					