

LANGUAGE!
The Comprehensive Literacy Curriculum

RESEARCH FOUNDATION & EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS



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At-A-Glance

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	Data Management Systemwide Results	Hawthorne, CA (ELL; longitudinal results)	Hawthorne, CA	Lee County, FL	Great Falls, MT	Sunnyside, AZ	Rialto, CA	Caldwell County, NC	Elk Grove, CA	Los Angeles County, CA	Sacramento City, CA
High School	✓								✓	✓	✓
Middle School	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Elementary School	✓						✓	✓			
Special Education	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	○
General Education	●	●	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	○	○
English Language Learners	●	●	●	●		○	●		○	●	○
Free/Reduced Lunch	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Race/Ethnicity	●	○	●	●	●	○	●		●	●	○

● Results are disaggregated by subgroup.

○ Population is represented in student participants, but results are not disaggregated.

Grounded in scientific research. Proven in districts like yours.

Foundation of Success

LANGUAGE!® The Comprehensive Literacy Curriculum was created for students in grades 4–12 who score at or below the 40th percentile on national norm-referenced reading tests. The curriculum is appropriate for students in general education and also supports the special instructional needs of English learners (ELs) and individualized education program (IEP) populations.

The LANGUAGE! curriculum, designed by Jane Fell Greene, Ed.D., was piloted in 1994–95 with 45 adjudicated minority students, ages 13 to 17, who were compared to a nontreatment control group in the same correctional program (Greene, 1996). Over 22 weeks, significant and noteworthy gains were achieved by LANGUAGE! students in oral reading rate and accuracy, reading comprehension, spelling, and word identification.

Since that auspicious beginning, the *LANGUAGE!* curriculum has continued to fortify its strong research foundation. From the initial development stages of *LANGUAGE!* First Edition, Greene and Cambium Learning® Group have continued to grow and develop the curriculum to its current copyright. More than 25 years of research supports the foundation and instruction behind *LANGUAGE!* Fourth Edition. We continue to use focus groups, interview pilot teachers, and conduct effectiveness studies to acquire feedback on what is needed in the intervention market and to inform the development of the curriculum.

LANGUAGE! Fourth Edition was developed to address current legislation and includes the five reading components identified by the National Reading Panel.

Through a six-step lesson design, *LANGUAGE!* teaches students the structure and use of all language systems necessary for successful reading and writing reports. Consistent evidence demonstrates that reading-delayed students who receive the *LANGUAGE!* curriculum exhibit statistically significant growth on standardized tests of reading and language. The impact of the curriculum has been observed in groups of students across 40 study sites in 29 states from diverse educational settings. The participants have included nonreaders, ELs, special education students, adjudicated juveniles, and poor readers. This report presents gains with *LANGUAGE!* among students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Evidence for Addressing the Needs of Struggling Adolescent Readers

LITERACY CRISIS. The literacy crisis among American students is well-documented (e.g., Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Federal and state initiatives for the early intervention and prevention of reading difficulty among primary grade students have received wide support. Today, educators are equally concerned about older students who cannot read well enough to perform at grade level. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that 25 percent of eighth grade students are reading below basic levels (the lowest possible rank, less than even partial mastery). In eighth grade, ethnic minority and special program students are failing to learn to read at alarming rates: 43 percent of black, 39 percent of Hispanic, 38 percent of American Indian, 74 percent of English language learners, and 62 percent of students with disabilities score below basic reading levels (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Students who are deficient in this most essential of academic skills drop out of high school far more often than others and join the ranks of the un- and underemployed. Academic failure is also associated with delinquency. Reading disability is overrepresented among youths in the juvenile justice system (Shelley-Tremblay, O'Brien, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2007).

EFFECTS OF READING DELAYS. Reading difficulty undermines students' abilities to succeed in every academic subject. The student who reads poorly avoids reading because reading is taxing, slow, and frustrating (Ackerman & Dykman, 1996; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). Older students present unique challenges: they cannot read well, so they do not like to read; reading is labored and unsatisfying, so they have little reading experience. And, because they have not read much, they are not familiar with the vocabulary, sentence structure, text organization, communicative devices, or concepts of "literate" language—the academic language of reading and writing.

Over time, the gap widens between their stagnant skills and the growing abilities of students who progress normally (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998; Stanovich & Siegel, 1994). Consequently, students who get off to a poor start in reading usually fail to develop the full range of language proficiencies that other students learn from reading itself.

Some of the students who experience reading failure beyond elementary school have learning disabilities (LDs), including dyslexia (Lyon, 1995), that require expert and individualized instruction. Many more poor readers who have not been classified as having an LD have similar instructional needs (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998). Poor readers at any age respond to intensive teaching of all components of reading, including phonics and word recognition, fluent reading of words in text, comprehension, and vocabulary (National Reading Panel, 2000). In the most expert and closely supervised settings, where small groups are taught for two hours daily, poor readers who score in the lowest 20th percentile have improved to the middle of the average range and maintained average scores over the following two years (Torgesen et al., 1997, 2001). This evidence clearly indicates that it is never too late to teach students to read.

LANGUAGE AND READING. Delayed readers typically score poorly on language tests of all kinds, even though they may score within the normal range on nonverbal tests, such as spatial reasoning or memory for visual patterns (Fletcher et al., 1994; Shankweiler, Lundquist, Dreyer, & Dickinson, 1996; Stanovich & Siegel, 1994). Language comprehension tests predict reading comprehension better than any other kind of IQ or cognitive ability test. Basic language skills are the best predictors of good or poor reading at all ages (Catts, Fey, Zhang, & Tomblin, 1999; Shankweiler et al., 1999). These basic language skills include (1) the ability to identify and manipulate the component speech sounds in spoken words, and (2) the speed and accuracy with which a student can read words in lists and in passages (Shankweiler et al., 1995, 1999; Stanovich & Siegel, 1994; Torgesen et al., 2001). Ninety percent of intermediate grade students who have trouble reading passages for comprehension do not read the words accurately and automatically (Shankweiler et al., 1999). They have not mastered sound-symbol association, syllable pattern recognition, or recognition of the meaningful prefixes, roots, or suffixes of longer words. In addition, their speed of word recognition is too slow to support higher-level comprehension. Without explicit and intensive attention to these basic skills, reading and language remain stagnant.

Reading and the Key Processing Systems of the Brain

Neuroscience and cognitive neuropsychology studies over the past decade have shown that there are key language processing networks in the brain that must be recruited to support reading. In addition, reading acquisition is the result of progressive integration of the subskills of language comprehension and fluent word recognition. The models in Figure 1 (Moats, 2005) and Figure 2 (Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989) reflect the now widely accepted model of the four principal language processing systems that are activated to support reading. Difficulties with learning to read can be conceptualized as weaknesses in one or more of these critical processes.

Aligning with brain research in the area of developing reading, *LANGUAGE!* builds good readers with an instructional model that gives students the skills and reading experience they need. By providing instruction in both foundational skills and more advanced reading concepts, *LANGUAGE!* changes the brain activation of students over time to reflect the general pattern of good readers (Figure 3; Moats & Tolman, 2009).

Figure 1

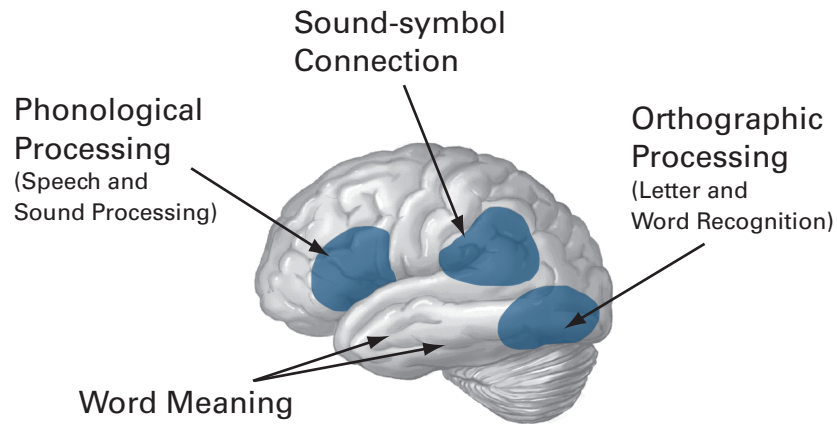


Figure 2

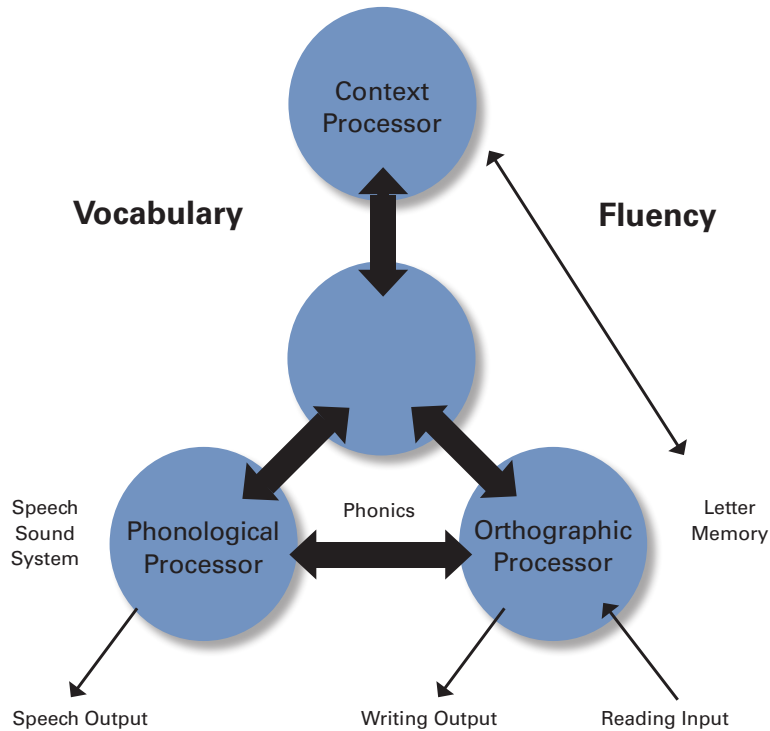
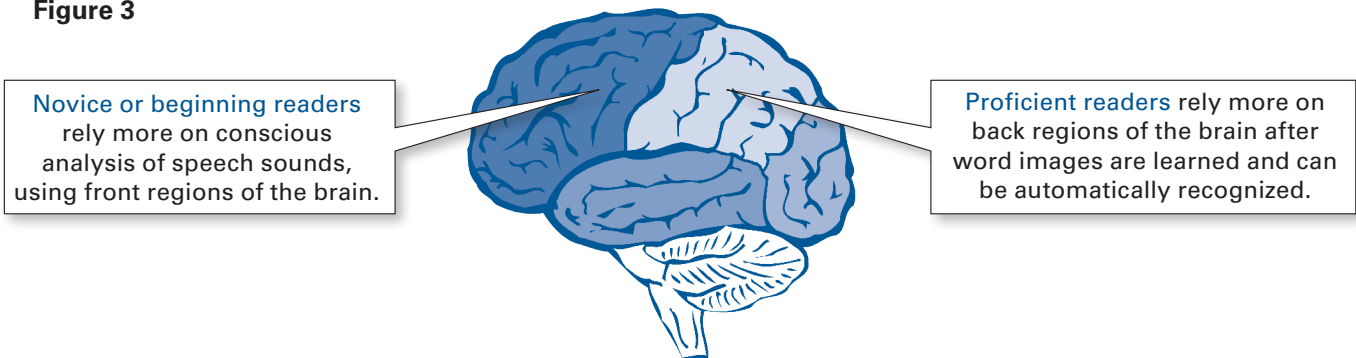


Figure 3



The Four Processing Systems and *LANGUAGE!*

The cumulative, integrated, scaffolded approach of *LANGUAGE!* provides the instruction necessary to build each of these key processes systematically, explicitly, and in parallel with one another. The following chart shows the alignment of *LANGUAGE!* instruction with the major processing requirements of reading.

Key Processing System	Instructional Implication	<i>LANGUAGE!</i> Alignment	Step of Instruction
<p>The Phonological Processor processes the speech sound system. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification, comparison, and manipulation of sounds • Pronunciation and production of sounds and words • Memory for sounds, words, and phrases • Linkage between sounds, spellings, and meanings 	<p>Teach phoneme identification, pronunciation, and awareness.</p>	<p><i>LANGUAGE!</i> teaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech sounds • Phoneme manipulation • Production and replication of sounds • Phoneme awareness (isolation, segmentation, blending, rhyming, deletion, substitution, and reversal) 	<p>Step 1: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics</p>
<p>The Orthographic Processor processes letters, letter patterns, and whole words. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition and formation of letters • Association of letters with speech sounds • Recognition of letter sequences, patterns, and whole words • Recall of letters for spelling 	<p>Call attention to the internal details and patterns of printed words.</p> <p>Link phonemes and graphemes.</p> <p>Build automatic word recognition for fluent reading of words, phrases, sentences, and passages.</p>	<p><i>LANGUAGE!</i> teaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word patterns • Word families • Latin and Greek roots • Sound-spelling correspondences • Syllables and syllable types • Sight words • Words based on phonemic concepts and high-frequency words • Letter-naming, word, and passage fluency 	<p>Step 1: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics</p> <p>Step 2: Word Recognition and Spelling</p>
<p>The Meaning Processor stores word meanings in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other words in the same semantic field • Categories and concepts • Examples of words in phrase context • The sounds, spelling, and syllables in the word • Meaningful parts (morphemes) 	<p>Teach vocabulary with attention to all these dimensions of meaning.</p>	<p><i>LANGUAGE!</i> teaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word meanings and multiple meanings • Morphemes (inflectional and derivational) • Latin and Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes • Word relationships, including antonyms, synonyms, homophones, and analogies • Word categorization • Words in context • Syllable types 	<p>Step 3: Vocabulary and Morphology</p> <p>Step 5: Listening and Reading Comprehension</p>
<p>The Context Processor interprets words we have heard, named, or partially identified with reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Experience • Knowledge of the concepts 	<p>Teach the background that children need to interpret what they read.</p> <p>Teach awareness of academic language syntax; genre conventions; and discourse structure (paragraphs, story, grammar, etc.).</p> <p>Teach the use of context to derive word meanings.</p>	<p><i>LANGUAGE!</i> teaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge needed for understanding text through vocabulary preview and review, group discussion, and question strategies • Language syntax, genre conventions, and systematic/cumulative discourse structure • Targeted strategies to enable students to derive word meaning from context 	<p>Step 4: Grammar and Usage</p> <p>Step 5: Listening and Reading Comprehension</p> <p>Step 6: Speaking and Writing</p>

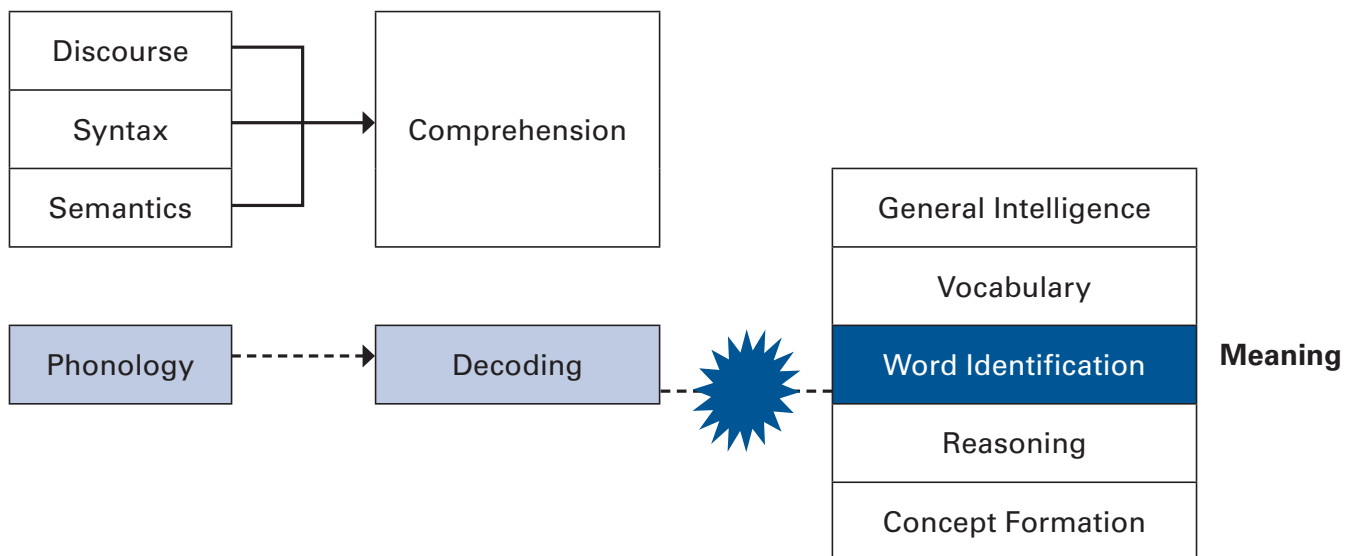
A now widely accepted understanding, based on evidence from cognitive and neurosciences, asserts that at the very foundational level of reading difficulties, students may not have the phonologic skills needed to read fluently. Unremediated problems with fluent and accurate word reading, in turn, erode comprehension (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003; Moats, 2001; Pugh et al., 2001; Shaywitz, 2003).

Pugh explains that “to learn to read, a child must first develop an appreciation of the sequential nature of speech and come to realize that spoken words are composed of the smallest of these segments—the phoneme.”

Shaywitz illustrates how this plays out with struggling readers in the following adapted diagram (Figure 4), showing that a phonologic weakness interferes with decoding, which, in turn, interferes with word identification, which impacts the construction of meaning for comprehension.

In consideration of these research-based concepts, *LANGUAGE!* recognizes that, although this population of students may be lacking the phonological skills necessary for fluent reading, they are capable of comprehending text selections, understanding text structure, and answering questions that require higher-order thinking skills. The curriculum addresses all literacy domains in every lesson, every day, from the first day. For students with basic decoding deficits, *LANGUAGE!* quickly and systematically instructs with an emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics in the early levels of the curriculum, transitioning to an emphasis on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in the later levels. Although all literacy domains are taught explicitly and systematically throughout the curriculum, this transition of emphasis allows students, especially those challenged with decoding and phonological processing skill deficits, to acquire and retain all literacy skills necessary for constructing meaning and comprehension.

Figure 4



Students Who Need *LANGUAGE!*

LANGUAGE! is designed to accelerate literacy development for upper elementary students reading two or more years below grade level. In grades 3–6, students who have already fallen behind need immediate, explicit, comprehensive intervention. Beyond grade 6, those who score at or below the 30th percentile need intensive intervention. *LANGUAGE!* places special emphasis on serving three groups of students:

- English learners—students who are not proficient with English as their primary language
- Curriculum casualties—struggling readers who do not qualify or have not been tested for special education but are at risk for reading failure
- Students with special needs—students with language-based learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, whose difficulties are in basic reading, reading comprehension, basic writing, and/or written expression

ENGLISH LEARNERS. To know a word, a student must have knowledge of that word's spoken and written form, its meaning, and its use, which refers to the word's frequency, register, collocations, and grammatical behavior (Nation, 1990). English learners' first language phonologies determine their need for practice producing difficult English phonemes (Swan & Smith, 2001). ELs also need to discriminate suffixes, contractions, and other difficult word forms (August & Shanahan, 2006; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Gersten et al., 2007; Goldenberg, 2008). In addition, students need explicit instruction in the production and discrimination of words in connected speech (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996/2002). From there, students need explicit instruction in English discourse intonation (Pike, 1945; Chun, 1988). Finally, ELs need explicit instruction in the linguistic forms constituting politeness in American culture (Rose & Kasper, 2001) and the features, functions, and usage of English (Saunders, Foorman, & Carlson, 2006).

***LANGUAGE!* addresses the needs of ELs by:**

- Providing activities designed for additional practice producing difficult phonemes
- Providing additional practice in suffix and contraction discrimination, as well as other difficult word forms
- Providing explicit instruction in the production and discrimination of words in connected speech and the means by which English speakers use intonation
- Including explicit instruction of idioms and common expressions
- Teaching collocational use and semantic differentials in semantically related words
- Emphasizing grammatical functions such as article use, negation in English, and additional practice with English verb tense formation
- Providing explicit instruction in the linguistic forms that constitute politeness in American culture

A Comprehensive Curriculum

LANGUAGE! is a comprehensive curriculum. Its instruction is cumulative, systematic, and explicit. Numerous reports indicate the importance of teacher-directed, scaffolded, cumulative, systematic, and explicit teaching in all components of remedial education (Swanson, 1999; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). For example, this type of instruction has been shown to be beneficial for teaching word identification (Curtis, 2004; Curtis & Longo, 1999) and closing the vocabulary gap between high- and low-performing students (Kamil, 2004). Biancarosa and Snow (2004) list 15 elements of effective adolescent literacy programs.



Of those, nine are instructional in nature. A synergistic benefit results from comprehensiveness. A dynamic and powerful interrelationship among the instructional elements affords the best opportunity for success.

The following pages provide the research evidence supporting each step in *LANGUAGE!*, identifying the specific literacy skills taught and the ways in which they are deficient in older readers. The instructional strategies *LANGUAGE!* employs to address these problems are also presented.

How *LANGUAGE!* Teaches the Six Steps

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Weaknesses in phonological processing are evident through late adolescence (Catts, Adolf, & Weisner, 2006) and require extended intervention periods to remediate (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007; Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007). Students who have not developed these foundational skills are less able to benefit from advanced word study (Reed & Vaughn, 2010). Poor readers' mental representations of the internal details of spoken words tend to be incomplete, nonspecific, or erroneous (Stone & Brady, 1995). Recognizing all the consonants in blends, distinguishing similar vowels while spelling words and learning their meanings, and repeating the sounds of similar words, such as reintegrate and reiterate, are especially problematic for students with weak phonological processing (Moats, 1996, 2000). Therefore, students often need practice with the same phonological awareness tasks that facilitate reading and spelling acquisition in young children but with different methods, timing, and conversation about phonology. Even though the approach may be different for older children, phonemic awareness is a critical building block for comprehension (Curtis, 2004). Curtis has found that there are middle and high school students who have reading problems that result from not having mastered the alphabetic principle. It is estimated that at least one out of every 10 adolescents has serious word identification difficulties stemming from problems associated with the phonological aspects of word analysis (Curtis & Longo, 1999; Curtis, 2004). Automatic and accurate sound-spelling correspondences are the foundations for word recognition and spelling, and high-frequency words should be one focus of instruction (Graham, Harris, & Loynachan, 1993; Blevins, 2001). These difficulties are compounded by the tendency in adolescents to abandon the process of trying to read a word and instead to guess at it based on context.

STEP *LANGUAGE!* Addresses Phonemic Awareness and Phonics by:

1

- Teaching phonemic awareness explicitly to establish the alphabetic principle—A series of multisensory activities teach phoneme matching, isolation, segmentation, blending, rhyming, deletion, substitution, and reversal
- Building sound-spelling correspondences systematically and cumulatively using multisensory methodologies to provide the building blocks of word analysis to read and spell words
- Extending phonological awareness to the level of syllable and morpheme awareness, which provides the essential building blocks to reading and spelling multisyllable words
- Building fluency at the level of sound symbols, letter names, and words throughout the curriculum

Word Recognition and Spelling

The ability to accurately and automatically manipulate the sound-spelling associations of English to read and spell words is foundational to fluent reading with comprehension, as well as fluent writing (composition). Since spelling and word reading depend on the same underlying knowledge, instruction in one skill should have a positive impact on the development of the other (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005; Tsesmeli & Seymour, 2008). Students with language and reading weaknesses often fail to develop sufficient decoding speed at the word level (Berninger, 1999; Ehri & Soffer, 1999; Wagner & Barker, 1994). Focusing first on the alphabetic principle and then on word-level automaticity, fluency practice is often the key to distinguishing skilled from less skilled readers through adolescence (Shaywitz et al., 1999). It is particularly important for older struggling students to become fluent with irregular words, as these words do not follow the regular rules for pronunciation (Shaywitz, 2003). Students should not be removed from a reading intervention program until they can read words and passages fluently at their grade levels (Shaywitz, 2003). It is highly important that adolescents learn to analyze words structurally so that they can cope successfully with complex texts and writing assignments (Curtis, 2004; Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006). By increasing the accuracy and efficiency with which students read words, word study skills contribute uniquely to reading comprehension (Scammacca et al., 2007). Learning composition (the content and organization of writing) will be limited in the intermediate grades if students' spelling and handwriting are poor (Berninger, 1999).

STEP *LANGUAGE!* Addresses Word Recognition and Spelling by:

2

- Emphasizing recognition of high-frequency words
- Differentiating instruction according to sound-spelling predictability (e.g., cat) or nondecodability (e.g., the)
- Including fluency drills focused on reading lists of phonologically predictable words, irregular words, phrases, and passages
- Teaching word recognition and spelling reciprocally
- Developing spelling generalizations

Vocabulary and Morphology

Word recognition is not achieved through the study of basic phonics alone (Moats & Smith, 1992). Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning vocabulary words (Dole, Sloan, & Trathen, 1995) and is best achieved when words are learned in relation to other known words and ideas (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Stahl, 1998). Comprehension is supported through the study of morphemes (Reed, 2008) and figurative language and expressions. A direct approach to teaching word definitions, connotation, and denotation should complement a contextual approach in which students are asked to speculate about possible meanings for new words they encounter in text (Baumann, Font, Edwards, & Boland, 2005; McCardle & Chhabra, 2004) and in which they are exposed to words in different contexts (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). This approach is effective for students with reading disabilities (Jitendra, Edwards, Sacks, & Jacobson, 2004) and ELLs (Francis et al., 2006). Idioms, figurative language, and literary terms based on Latin and Greek morphemes—such as concede, proceed, recede, intercede, and supersede—may be unfamiliar to most students (Henry, 1997; Jones & Stone, 1989; Nippold, 1998; Templeton & Morris, 2000). There is direct evidence of the strong relationship between vocabulary comprehension and the ability to read at higher readability levels. Thus, to a considerable degree, vocabulary knowledge determines language comprehension and literacy (Biemiller, 1999).

STEP 3 *LANGUAGE!* Addresses Vocabulary and Morphology by:

3

- Building word knowledge through the development of multiple meanings; strategies to define words; and study of word relationships, including antonyms, synonyms, homophones, and analogies
- Developing vocabulary knowledge in context along with strategies to use the context to determine word meanings
- Including ongoing instruction with idioms, expressions, and figurative language
- Teaching common morphemes, beginning with inflectional endings -ed, -s, and -ing
- Emphasizing the existence of large word families connected by a root—Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek roots and affixes are taught sequentially and cumulatively

Grammar and Usage

While the level of communication is typically at the level of text, the unit of building text is the sentence (Scott, 2004). Understanding how words are put together to create sentences has an impact on both listening and reading comprehension, as well as on speaking and writing (Graham & Herbert, 2010). This understanding requires knowledge of the form, function, and syntactical arrangement of words—that is, the content of grammar and usage. Comprehending and composing embedded clauses, passive voice, verb tenses, and pronoun referents are among the recurring challenges for students with language weaknesses (Westby, 2004). If students are more facile with complex grammatical structures, sophisticated text will be easier for them to comprehend (Foorman, 2009). Additionally, syntactic knowledge of written text contributes to the ability to parse text (i.e., read in meaningful phrases), which affects reading fluency and comprehension. Knowledge of syntax makes sentence parsing more logical and, in turn, the text more comprehensible (Scott, 2004). Syntax also plays a role in spelling. The ability to use syntactic awareness can help students make more accurate spelling decisions and avoid overreliance on phonetic strategies. For example, morphosyntactic awareness helps distinguish between the uses of *s* on trees in oak trees versus tree’s branches. It is the grammatical knowledge of the function of trees in each phrase—plural in one; possessive in the other—that yields the correct spelling (Scott, 2004). Facility with a variety of syntactic structures also contributes to writing fluency, which, in turn, contributes to better developed and more coherent compositions (Graham & Perin, 2007).

STEP 4 *LANGUAGE!* Addresses Grammar and Usage by:

4

- Providing the building blocks for comprehension and writing
- Teaching the form and function of words in sentences, progressing from nouns to verbs to modifiers to function words
- Emphasizing the relationship between morphological features and grammatical function (e.g., the inflectional ending -ed signals past-tense verb)
- Teaching sentence structure, elaboration, and combining
- Making the abstract relationship between sentence parts concrete through the use of diagramming

Listening and Reading Comprehension

Incidental exposure to words alone is not enough to facilitate growth in the many subskills that constitute reading, either for decoding (Gillon & Dodd, 1995) or comprehension (Williams, 1998). Meta-analysis of reading recommends direct, explicit comprehension instruction focusing on strategies to understand text, teacher modeling of effective strategies for students, and a gradual transfer of responsibility for monitoring one's own comprehension—that is, moving from teacher modeling to student's independent use (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Alfassi, 2004; Guthrie et al., 2004; Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2008). Additionally, students need to be able to negotiate a variety of text structures of increasing complexity and difficulty (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Adolescents who struggle with reading have less familiarity with the structures of narrative (Boulineau, Fore, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2004) as well as informational text (Gajria, Jitendra, Sood, & Sacks, 2007). Recent research reports suggest that comprehension interventions should include graphic organizers, building content knowledge, explicit instruction in summarizing, generating and answering text-related questions, linking text to background knowledge, and self-monitoring (Boardman et al., 2008). The instruction should involve more than rehearsal of skills; rather, it should include extended discussions of text meaning (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003), awareness of the cognitive processes involved, teacher modeling of how and why to use strategies that support comprehension, and meaningful opportunities for instructional feedback (Alfassi, 2004; Beck & McKeown, 2006; Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996; Guthrie et al., 2004; Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2008). Finally, through direct instruction, it is important for teachers to make a distinction between the topic of the passage (what the passage is about) and the main idea (what the author says about the topic) because main idea identification affects student performance on reading comprehension activities such as summarizing and outlining (Longo, 2001).

STEP 5 **LANGUAGE!** Addresses Listening and Reading Comprehension by:

5

- Emphasizing strategies to improve fluent reading, including phrasing and repeated readings
- Teaching context-based vocabulary strategies to enhance comprehension
- Teaching comprehension strategies directly, including predicting, clarifying, and summarizing
- Stressing identification of the hierarchy of information in text (i.e., topic, main idea, details)
- Using graphic organizers to represent the structure and organization of information in text
- Providing text selections that are based on both decodability criteria (California Department of Education, 1999) and readability values (Touchstone Applied Science Associates Inc., 2000) to guide the gradual increase of difficulty for all levels of text
- Providing reading material on a wide range of topics at multiple reading levels in each unit
- Emphasizing the use of informational text to build vocabulary and background knowledge to prepare for academic texts
- Systematically teaching the signal words associated with the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to increase understanding of comprehension questions (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Longo, 2001; Fry, Kress, & Fountoukidis, 2000)

Speaking and Writing

Research supports teaching explicit strategies for planning, revising, and editing through the writing process as the key to helping students achieve self-directed writing (Graham & Perin, 2007). The techniques taught should be coordinated with other dimensions of literacy learning (Berninger & Richards, 2002), so it is recommended that students write about the texts they read, learn to combine sentences to vary their length and complexity, and use organizational patterns or text structures as a reciprocal means to improve both their reading and writing (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Monroe & Troia, 2006). For example, making the organizational patterns or structure of the text clear for the reader through graphic organizers has

proven effective in improving comprehension of adolescent poor readers (Longo, 2001; Taylor & Beach, 1984), dyslexic readers, and those with other learning disabilities (Shaywitz, 2003). Teaching poor readers systematic strategies to recall information from written materials also helps to facilitate reading comprehension.

Instruction in a combination of study-skill strategies proves most effective in improving the ability of students to gain information from text. These include main idea instruction, summarizing, note taking, and outlining (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997) as well as responding to text and answering questions about text in writing (Graham & Hebert, 2010).

STEP 6 *LANGUAGE!* Addresses Speaking and Writing by:

6

- Teaching the underlying skills that must be learned to an automatic level in frequent, distributed practice to enable higher-level skills
- Teaching students how to write increasingly complex written forms—from sentences to essays
- Providing extensive practice formulating oral and written answers
- Making the abstract relationship between ideas and information concrete through the use of graphic organizers, templates, and outlining
- Emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing through an understanding of text structures
- Stressing the identification and use of signal words that differentiate organizational patterns and text structure (e.g., first, next, and last signal time sequence)

The *LANGUAGE!* Assessment and Instructional System

Assessment

The difficulty of learning to read varies significantly among students. However, the major contributor to reading failure is instruction that is inadequate to the student's needs or demands of the reading program. The best strategy for preventing and correcting reading difficulties is explicit, systematic instruction, guided by ongoing assessment (adapted from Adams, 1997). Students are more successful when the level of learning is in their instructional range; they spend more time on task and ultimately have greater reading comprehension (Treptow, Burns, & McComas, 2007).

***LANGUAGE!* addresses assessment by implementing a comprehensive assessment system:**

PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT. Noncurriculum-based assessments are administered to identify appropriate entry into the program. They facilitate student achievement by appropriately targeting instructional materials for a student's reading ability.

ONGOING ASSESSMENT. Regular testing of student mastery of the content, concepts, and skills taught in the curriculum ensures that teachers have current information about each student in order to adjust pacing or provide instructional support activities for individual students.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT. Summative assessment consists of two types of assessments: curriculum-based and noncurriculum-based. First, curriculum-based assessments evaluate the student's mastery of the *LANGUAGE!* content, concepts, and skills. Second, noncurriculum-based assessments evaluate key skills using measures from outside of the *LANGUAGE!* curriculum. The tests are standardized with high levels of validity and reliability, and a student's score can be compared with other students' scores in the normative samples (Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001). These assessments not only inform instruction, but can be used by local, state, and national educators and administrators to track students through a school year, allowing for ongoing internal and external evaluation of the curriculum's implementation (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004).

By using multiple measures embedded within the curriculum, teachers have the ability to make determinations about individual student successes and modify instruction as needed to ensure that students are on the path to reaching their achievement goals.

Differentiated Instruction

The *LANGUAGE!* Teacher Editions provide for differentiated instruction. They delineate flexible instructional pacing. The need for differentiated instruction and flexible pacing and grouping has been validated in numerous studies (Lou et al., 1996; Kulik & Kulik, 1991; Ben Ari & Shafir, 1988; Dahloff, 1971; Oakes, 1985). In *LANGUAGE!*, pacing and grouping are driven by data from ongoing assessment. Assessments linked to the curriculum objectives inform teachers' instructional decision making (Fuchs, Deno, & Mirkin, 1984; Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001).



DIFFERENTIATION FOR CURRICULUM CASUALTIES. The term “Curriculum Casualties” describes students who do not qualify or have not been tested for special education but are at risk for reading failure. Differentiation in *LANGUAGE!* provides the mode and resources to help accelerate literacy development for these students. The *LANGUAGE!* assessment system provides for ongoing and summative evaluation and guides teachers to further customized instruction. When students struggle, differentiated instruction is supported through Prescriptive Teaching Boxes, Special Instructional Support activities, and the Homework Options chart.

DIFFERENTIATION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS. *LANGUAGE!* offers multiple modes of differentiated instruction to promote the language acquisition of English learners. Beginning with newcomers who possess virtually no English skills, the goal of the curriculum is to bring ELs to full fluency in spoken and written English simultaneously. Differentiated instruction for ELs is supported by: visual vocabulary, Focus on Academic Language lessons, special instruction support and homework charts, Contrastive Analyses, and *Everyday English for Newcomers to English*.

DIFFERENTIATION FOR STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE-BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES. The *LANGUAGE!* curriculum includes features that address the particular needs of students with language-based learning disabilities. Regular assessment matched with clear prescriptions for differentiation provide multiple opportunities for students to revisit skills and develop long-term retention of essential literacy concepts.

Motivation

Motivated students engage more with text and have better reading achievement and academic success (Wigfield et al., 2008). Building choices into the students' school day is critical to reawakening their drive to learn. Allowing students a range of choices of reading materials and activities, along with providing proper instructional support, promotes self-regulation—a skill that helps not only with academic pursuits but also with other endeavors (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Teachers who successfully promote literacy in their classrooms focus on more than one or two methods to increase engagement (Guthrie et al., 2004). Strategies for fostering motivation and engagement include providing a range of interesting reading materials at different levels of difficulty, creating opportunities for student collaboration and interaction, and focusing students on important and interesting learning goals (Guthrie, Wigfield, & VonSecker, 2000; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004).

***LANGUAGE!* addresses motivation by:**

- Providing frequent feedback on small increments of learning through lesson checklists, self-evaluations, and frequent, curriculum-based assessments
- Promoting relevancy through varied text topics in the reading selections at different levels of difficulty
- Developing strategies that allow students to self-monitor their performance

Conclusion

The sense of urgency and need for reform in improving adolescent literacy is well-documented. *LANGUAGE! The Comprehensive Literacy Curriculum* has identified and incorporated many elements emphasized by the reading and reading-intervention literature. The effectiveness of the six steps in *LANGUAGE!* and other facets of the curriculum is supported by abundant scientific research.

The goal of this report is to enable literacy professionals to evaluate the curriculum with clarity. The ultimate result is to accelerate improvement in student achievement.

Reading Growth Among *LANGUAGE!* Students Nationwide

During the 2008–2009 academic year, an estimated 627 school districts in 48 states across the United States implemented *LANGUAGE!* with more than 500,000 students who were identified as needing remedial literacy instruction in grades 3–12.

The *LANGUAGE!* curriculum is composed of six levels, or books (Book A through Book F), that guide the student sequentially through the development of reading and writing skills. The annual goal is to move students through two book levels of the curriculum and register two years of improvement in literacy skills. The goal of this evaluation was to examine student growth in reading achievement during the implementation of *LANGUAGE!* over multiple years in districts using the curriculum's online reporting system.

For this evaluation, data from a pre- and posttest measure used to assess progress in reading—the Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency (TOSWRF)—were obtained from the curriculum's online reporting system. The TOSWRF is a norm-referenced measure of word reading fluency. Students are presented with a row of words, ordered by reading difficulty; the words are run together without spaces. Students are given three minutes to place lines between the boundaries of as many words as possible. The test consists of two equivalent forms (A and B). The TOSWRF provides national percentile ranks and grade equivalents.

Results are reported for students in grades 3–12 with matched pre- and posttest data, which included 11,117 students with matching TOSWRF percentiles. The data were obtained from all implementations in the reporting system and hence represent typical school settings and a wide range of implementation conditions.

The findings show that students gained, on average, 5 percentiles after completing Books A and B ($n = 6,602$) of *LANGUAGE!*, 18 percentiles after completing Books C and D ($n = 4,515$), and 21 percentiles after Books C–F ($n = 646$), indicating that these students are “closing the gap” with average readers in word reading fluency (see Figure 1). All subgroups improved approximately one-half a standard deviation, which is considered educationally meaningful.

To illustrate the outcomes that are possible with *LANGUAGE!*, the results were broken out for students with gains in the top quartile. During the use of *LANGUAGE!*, these students, on average, improved 1.4 standard deviations, which is considered highly significant (see Figure 2). After completing Book A, this subgroup ($n = 4,111$) moved from the 7th percentile, considered poor performance, to the 45th percentile in the average range; after Books A and B ($n = 1,651$), students improved from below average performance at the 9th percentile to average performance at the 58th percentile. After Books C and D, students ($n = 1,646$) moved from the below average range at the 18th percentile to above average performance at the 77th percentile; students who completed Books C–F ($n = 211$) also improved from the below average range to the above average range at the 84th percentile.

When student outcomes were examined on a grade equivalent scale, students in the top quartile improved between 2 and 7 years during the use of *LANGUAGE!* (see Figure 3). The most dramatic gains were seen for students who completed more than one level of the curriculum.

National data indicate that use of *LANGUAGE!*, and particularly continued use across more than one book level, results in increased student achievement in the critical skills of word identification and fluency. For more systemwide data, specific

statewide and regional results, and data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language acquisition, and special/general education enrollment, please visit www.voyagersopris.com/language.

Data were obtained from all *LANGUAGE!* implementations and are representative of typical school settings.

Students improved nearly half a standard deviation from their placement test to their end-of-book test, which is considered *significant*.

ϵ measures student gains from placement to given books as measured by changes in standard deviation.

Students in the top quartile gained, on average, 50 percentiles in word reading fluency.

Students moved from the *poor* and *below average* ranges to the *average* and *above average* ranges during the use of *LANGUAGE!*

ϵ measures student gains from placement to given books as measured by changes in standard deviation.

Figure 1. TOSWRF percentile rank results by book for grades 3–12: All *LANGUAGE!* students systemwide.

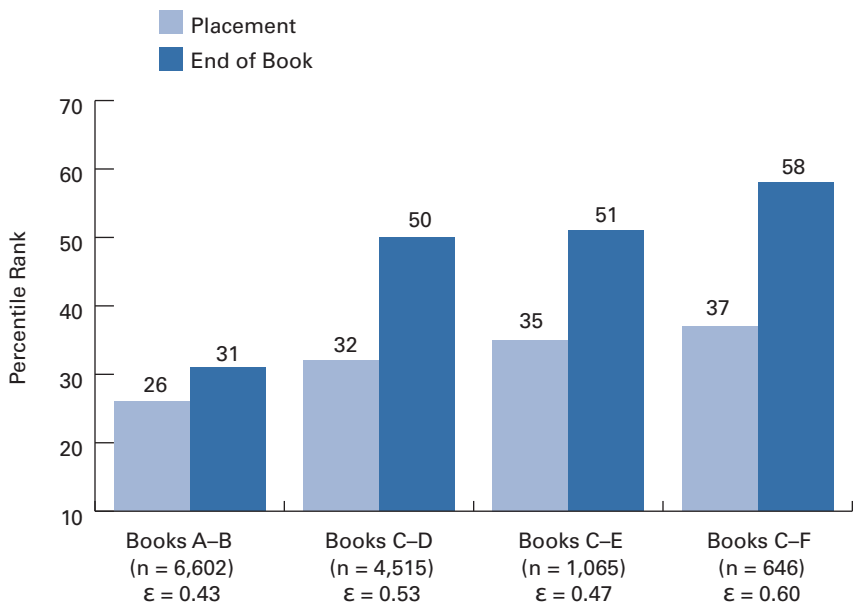
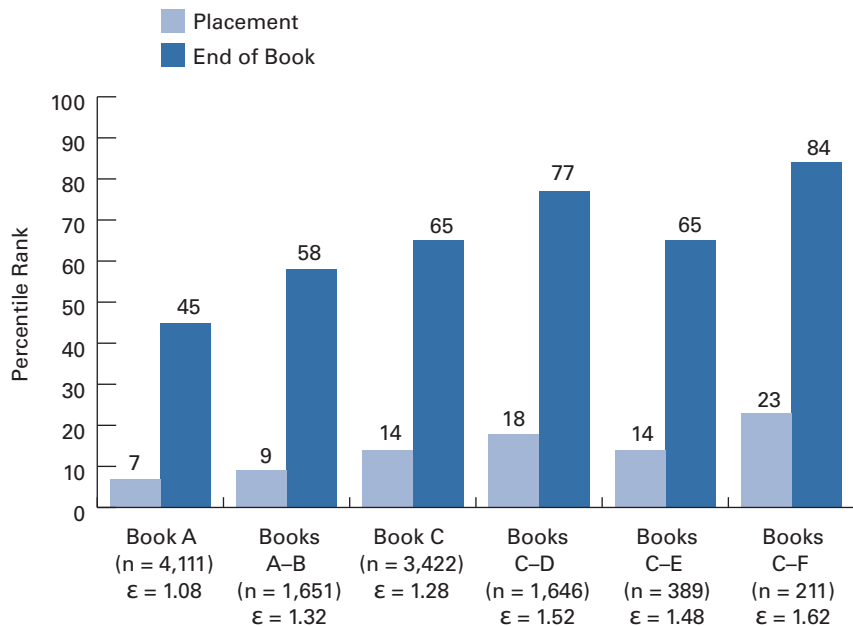


Figure 2. TOSWRF percentile rank results by book for grades 3–12: Top 25% of *LANGUAGE!* students systemwide.

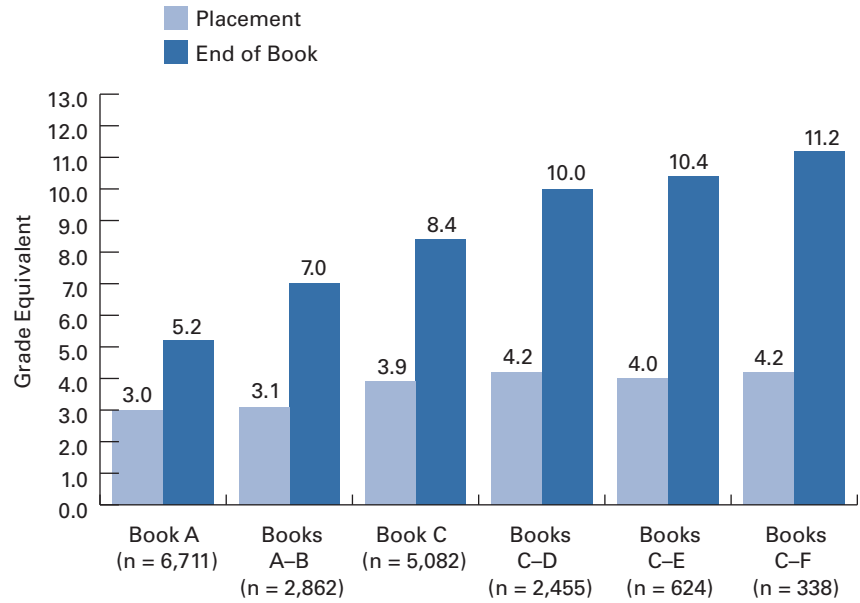


Students in the top quartile improved between 2 and 7 years in word reading fluency.

The most dramatic gains were seen for students who completed more than one level of the curriculum.

Implementing with fidelity ensures accelerated growth and student success.

Figure 3. TOSWRF grade equivalent results by book for grades 3–12: Top 25% of *LANGUAGE!* students systemwide.



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