A Multisensory Curriculum for Teaching Reading, Spelling, and Handwriting

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with the assistance of Elizabeth McGoldrick
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PAF is a reading program written for teachers, by teachers. It is based on scientific research and over four decades of classroom experience. It may be very different from other reading programs you have used, but for some children it is the only program that will work.

We began our careers as primary teachers in the public schools of New York City and Boston in the 1960s. From the start, we encountered children who puzzled us—children who struggled to read despite their and our best efforts. We tried everything we could think of: different reading programs, lunchtime tutoring, reward systems. Nothing worked, and we were as frustrated as the children.

Later, when studying for our graduate degrees, we were introduced to the emerging field of learning disabilities and a reading methodology called Orton-Gillingham. Orton-Gillingham instruction was designed specifically to be used one-on-one with students with learning disabilities, and it worked!

We immediately saw for ourselves that the key to teaching children with learning disabilities is the right type of instruction. We developed ways to adapt Orton-Gillingham techniques for classroom use, reaching more children effectively, efficiently, and economically. Most important, we realized that if the instruction was introduced in the primary grades, reading failure actually could be prevented. With the encouragement of our school system (we were both together now in New York), we wrote Preventing Academic Failure (PAF) with the hope that regular education teachers would teach all children to read by providing instruction based on Orton-Gillingham techniques in their classrooms.

Each year, we screened kindergarten classes for children who might be at risk for learning disabilities and offered PAF instruction in their regular classrooms. By the fourth grade, 98 percent of these children were reading at or above grade level, and none required
special education services. These impressive results were consistent year after year. Soon the program was being replicated in other districts, and we found ourselves both using it and training other teachers.

We have relied on our own teaching experience, the feedback of hundreds of PAF teachers, and the latest scientific research to constantly refine and update the program. We did not invent Orton-Gillingham instruction, but we have written the most comprehensive, effective, and teacher-friendly classroom adaptation available. We are confident you will see amazing results with all your students. Decades after developing PAF, a program that helps every child learn to read, we remain excited and passionate about teaching, because we have found a program that works.

Phyllis Bertin, MS, is a noted lecturer, teacher trainer and school consultant. After teaching mainstream and special education classes, she became the director of special education for the Weston Public Schools, in Connecticut, and then director of education for Windward School, in White Plains, New York. Mrs. Bertin has been a board member of the New York State Branch of the International Dyslexia Association from 1985-1991 and received the Branch Award from the International Dyslexia Association in 1999.

Eileen Perlman, MS, began her career as a classroom teacher and reading specialist and was clinical director of the Reading Initiative Program at the Churchill Center, in Manhattan from 2002-2006. For over thirty years, she was a learning disabilities specialist for the White Plains Public Schools. In addition to her private practice involving diagnosis and remediation, Ms. Perlman is a highly regarded lecturer, teacher trainer, and educational consultant.

Both Mrs. Bertin and Ms. Perlman are fellows of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators.
Learning to read is the most difficult task children face when they first come to school. Some learn to read effortlessly regardless of how they are taught, but about half of school-age children, including the learning disabled, do not learn how to read intuitively. They require a systematic phonics-based program in which reading, spelling, and handwriting are taught as one unified lesson (known as multisensory reading instruction).

Preventing Academic Failure (PAF) fulfills that requirement. It is a comprehensive three-year program for teaching reading, writing, and spelling in the primary grades using multisensory techniques. PAF is designed to prevent reading failure in children with learning disabilities when begun in kindergarten or first grade. It is easier to prevent reading problems than to remediate them. But, it can also be used as an effective beginning reading program for all children and incorporates the reading practices supported by scientific research.

**What is multisensory instruction?**

Multisensory instruction is a way of teaching reading that integrates reading, spelling, and handwriting into unified lessons. Unlike conventional programs in which these three subjects are taught separately, multisensory programs use a combined approach in which children simultaneously see the letters (visual input), say the letter sounds (auditory input), and write the letters (kinesthetic input). Children read and spell the same material within the same lesson. By strengthening associations and automatic recall, multisensory instruction helps improve word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension.

Multisensory instruction is based on the work of the physician Dr. Samuel Torrey Orton in the first half of the twentieth century. Dr. Orton was a pioneer in the field of dyslexia, a learning disability that results in reading difficulties. He was among the first to recognize the importance of proper instruction in treating the disorder. The original Orton-Gillingham reading program, developed by Dr. Orton, Anna Gillingham, and Bessie Stillman, was remedial and designed to be used one-on-one with individuals with dyslexia. PAF incorporates the theory and techniques of Orton-Gillingham instruction into an early intervention program intended to be used in schools with groups of children at-risk for reading difficulties.
What are some of the research-based practices in PAF?

PAF incorporates all the instructional practices supported by the latest research. A list of the most important sources can be found in the bibliography. Here are some of the research-based practices that form the foundation of PAF.

- **Explicit phonics** lessons in which children are taught to decode and blend sounds into words in order to develop their word recognition skills.

- **A sequence of concepts** that progresses from the simplest unit of language (letters) to the most complex (text), with skills practiced and reinforced at each level until they are automatic.

- **Oral reading** under the supervision of the teacher that allows children’s errors to be monitored and corrected to develop accurate reading. Only when children read accurately can they access the meaning of a text.

- **Repeated readings** that provide the practice needed to develop word recognition and fluency.

- **Decodable text** that contains only the sounds and words that have been taught, and enables children to apply their word analysis skills in a meaningful context.

- **The integration of reading, spelling, and handwriting**, which helps develop the decoding and word recognition skills needed for comprehension.

- **Comprehension strategies**, including visualizing, rereading, predicting, paraphrasing, and summarizing, taught under teacher direction.

What kinds of students will benefit from the PAF program?

All beginning readers can benefit from PAF instruction, but for struggling readers, it is critical. Many children start school without an understanding that words can be broken down into sounds (phonemic awareness). Therefore, they cannot learn the first important idea in beginning reading, that each sound in English is represented by a letter or letters (the alphabetic principle). Consequently, decoding and word recognition skills develop slowly, if at all, and without strong word recognition, comprehension suffers. PAF teaches the alphabetic principle, higher-level word analysis skills, and comprehension strategies directly, with sufficient practice and reinforcement to ensure that all children learn to read.

PAF’s step-by-step progression leads to an increased sense of mastery and self-esteem. It results in minimum frustration and maximum success for teachers and students.
What are the components of the PAF program?

This teacher handbook is the key to the PAF program. It is your guide to using all the program materials in a sequence of unified lessons. The handbook will tell you which skills to teach, and when and how to teach them. It contains a wealth of information and will soon become your reading bible!

PAF has everything you need for a successful reading program:

✓ Card packs for introducing and reviewing skills
✓ Word, phrase, and sentence lists for developing accurate and fluent reading
✓ Decodable readers and skills books for teaching comprehension
✓ Handwriting books for teaching print, cursive, and numerals
How is the handbook organized?
The handbook contains four main sections:

**Daily Lesson** (pages 5-34)
This section explains the **WHY** and **HOW** of a multisensory lesson. It will help you understand how multisensory instruction is different from other reading programs and how to plan your daily lesson.

**Instructional Sequence** (pages 35-148)
Beginning on page 35, you will find a 215-level Instructional Sequence that lists **WHAT** skills to teach and **WHEN** to teach them. Each level in the sequence includes specific teaching instructions, information about which pages to use in the PAF materials, and lists of words and sentences to be used for the spelling part of the lesson.

**Proficiency Tests** (pages 149-180)
This section contains thirteen curriculum-based assessments that are to be administered periodically in order to determine your students’ progress and to set instructional goals.

**Appendix** (pages 181-216)
This section of the handbook contains supplemental information and resources, such as instructions for teaching handwriting, lesson plan forms, sample lessons, and a list of materials. The Rules of Thumb summarizes all the patterns of English that you will teach in the PAF program.
The daily lesson includes the teaching of decoding, comprehension, spelling, handwriting, and grammatical concepts. The sequence of the lesson always remains the same. Each part of the lesson sets the groundwork for the next, beginning with a review of sounds and ending with the teaching of reading comprehension. Here are the five components of the lesson.

1. **Review** (5-10 minutes)
   Children review previously learned sound/symbol associations, nonphonetic words, and suffixes.

2. **Introduction of New Material** (amount of time varies)
   A new concept is taught from one of the following areas:
   - Sound/Symbol Associations (Phonograms)
   - Nonphonetic Words (Red Words)
   - Suffixes
   - Syllable Types and Syllable Division
   - Spelling Rules

3. **Spelling Dictation** (20-30 minutes)
   Children apply the new concept to the spelling of words in isolation and in sentences.

4. **Reading** (45-60 minutes)
   Children read word, phrase, and sentence lists to develop accuracy and fluency. (10-15 minutes)
   Children read decodable text with an adult to develop comprehension skills. (30-45 minutes)

5. **Reinforcement** (amount of time varies)
   Children work independently for additional practice, either at school or at home.

The lesson will take one to one and a half hours in total, but it does not have to be done in one sitting. As you plan your daily schedule, you may intersperse parts of the lesson with other activities. For example, you might do the Review, Introduction of New Material, and Spelling Dictation, send the students to art classes, do Reading, and finally give the students homework for Reinforcement. The sequence of the daily lesson, however, must remain the same.

Each component of the daily lesson will be explained in greater detail, beginning on the following page.
During the review of each set, you will give two different kinds of prompts: (1) a visual prompt, meaning you show the children a card and they say and write their response; and (2) an auditory prompt, meaning you say what is on the card without showing it to the children and again they say and write their response. The children respond exactly the same regardless of the prompt.

**Review of Phonograms**

A phonogram is a written letter or group of letters that stand for a speech sound. For example, the letter *d* represents the sound /d/, the letters *ph* represent the sound /f/, and *igh* represents /i/*.

After each phonogram is introduced, you will place the appropriate card in the phonogram section of the review pack. During the review, the children will practice each phonogram they are learning by associating the letter with its sound and motor pattern (how the letter is formed).

When reviewing phonograms, never use the letter names, because the names do not help in sounding out words.

**Children respond to visual prompt (letter form)**

Show the phonogram card to the children. Have them respond in unison by saying its sound and skywriting simultaneously.

*Skywriting* means writing the letter in the air using the muscles of the upper arm and shoulder in a full arm swing. To ensure that the large muscles are used, the elbow must be straight and the index and middle fingers extended.

*When you see a letter in slash marks in this handbook, such as */f/*, say the sound of the letter, not its name.*
Skywriting is an efficient way to do the review. It takes children less time to skywrite than to write on paper. Also, having students skywrite their responses allows you to immediately spot and correct their errors. Because students use their large muscles to skywrite, they are able to feel subtle differences in the formation of letters, such as $b$ and $d$. Finally, large muscle memory is very strong. You never forget how to ride a bike or swim. By using large muscles, skywriting helps students remember how to write the letters.

Remember to limit each review to the specific association between the letter form, the sound, and the motor pattern. Students do not need to practice saying the letter names.

**Children respond to auditory prompt (letter sound)**
Say the sound that appears on an unexposed card. Have the children respond by repeating the sound and skywriting. Finally, show the review card to the class.

**Review of Red Words**
Red words cannot be sounded out, regardless of the children’s level of phonetic proficiency, and simply must be memorized. They are called red words because just as a red traffic light means stop, children must stop at these words, because they cannot be decoded. *Said, was,* and *from* are examples of red words. Since red words cannot be sounded out, **children will say the letter names instead of the letter sounds** during this part of the review; for example, *said, s-a-i-d.*

**Children respond to visual prompt (word form)**
Show the red word card. Have the children respond in unison, saying the word and naming each letter as they skywrite it (*said, s-a-i-d*).

**Children respond to auditory prompt (word name)**
Say the word on an unexposed card. Have the children respond in unison by repeating the word and spelling it aloud, naming each letter as they skywrite. Finally, show the class the review card.
After the review, the new material for the lesson is introduced. The new material will be a phonogram, red word, syllabication skill, or spelling rule. You will find information about which concepts to teach and in what order to teach them in the Instructional Sequence.

**Introduction of a Phonogram**

Phonograms are always introduced with a picture of the keyword containing the new sound. The first phonograms that you will teach are the letters of the alphabet, using the Alphabet Picture Cards.

At the beginning of the program, when you are teaching the individual letters of the alphabet, the introduction of each letter will include instruction on how to write the letter. Handwriting is an integral part of multisensory instruction, because writing letters creates kinesthetic memory of their form. This helps children to read and spell by compensating for auditory and visual memory problems.

**Here’s what you should do:**

- Hold up the picture card and tell the children, *Today we are going to learn how to write the first sound in fish. What is the first sound in fish?* A child responds, *The first sound in fish is /f/.* Try to avoid adding /û/ to the consonants, as this interferes with blending sounds into words. For example, say /f/, not /fûh/. Have each child repeat the sound to make sure everyone has the pronunciation correct.

- Give the children the letter name: *This is the letter f* (point to the keyword card) *and the way to write the sound /f/.*

- Demonstrate how to form the letter. You will begin by teaching the lowercase form of each letter, because that is what the children need to learn so that they can read and spell words. The capitals are taught in separate lessons.

In the Appendix, you will find comprehensive instructions on how to teach handwriting. Be sure to read the handwriting section before you begin teaching the program.
After the Review and Introduction of New Material, the newly introduced skill is incorporated into a spelling dictation.

Spelling is a critical tool for teaching reading. In order to spell, children must learn to break words into sounds (phonemic awareness), and become familiar with the letter and letter combinations that represent those sounds (phonics). Learning how to spell improves word recognition and vocabulary, which, in turn, support reading comprehension. In a multisensory program, reading and spelling are taught as reciprocal subjects; children spell and read the same words in one lesson.

Learning disabled children are characteristically poor spellers because of poor phonemic awareness, poor knowledge of letter-sound relationships, difficulty remembering words by sight, and lack of reading experience. The type of spelling program that works best for them is one that includes the direct teaching of phonemic awareness, letter-sound associations, syllable types, and spelling rules in a controlled sequence through the use of spelling dictations.

Spelling is the process of translating a spoken word into its written equivalent (encoding). Dictations allow children to practice encoding words under a teacher’s supervision. They provide an opportunity to think and talk about language structure. Children practice spelling words before attempting to read them.

Words and sentences used for dictation are listed in the Instructional Sequence and have been controlled to contain only words that the children can spell based on prior lessons. Select six to nine words and one to three sentences for each dictation, using the lesser amounts for young students who are still learning to write and the larger amounts later in the program. Choose sentences that contain words you have already dictated in isolation.
Spelling on Paper

After spelling a few words using the pocket chart, you will dictate more words for the children to write directly on paper. For instructions on specific writing papers to use, see the handwriting section in the Appendix. A dictation is not the same as a spelling test; you must correct each word on every paper before dictating the next one. By the end of each dictation, every word on every paper in the room should be spelled correctly.

Here is what you should do:

- Dictate a word and use it in a sentence; for example, cut: He has a cut on his finger.
- Have the children repeat the word.
- At the beginning of the program, model how to say the word sound-by-sound as the children repeat the sounds and write the corresponding letters. Over time, they will begin to automatically sound out words by themselves.
- Walk around the room to check each child’s work and give feedback. If a word is spelled correctly, place a check above it. If a word is incorrect, help the child by asking him questions so he can correct his own work. Never correct errors for the children.

Here are some common spelling errors and examples of how to guide the children to make corrections:

- **Vowel substitutions**
  If a child writes pin for pen, ask: What vowel sound do you hear in the word pen?

- **Final consonant substitutions**
  If a child writes mob for mop, ask: What is the last sound in the word mop?

- **Letter omissions**
  If a child writes let for left, say: The word is left. What letter did you leave out?

When children have misspelled a word, have them draw a line through the word or put brackets around it and then **write the entire word again**. If a number of children make the same error, ask the children to put down their pencils, and discuss the correct spelling with the entire class. One of the most important parts of dictations is the opportunity to engage your class in conversations about what they are learning. Remember, make sure all the children have spelled the word correctly before dictating the next one.
Sample Dictations

Lily
not [jod] job top fox
pots quit
Did Tom [qvit] his job?

Jayden
keep three (sheet) street
queen needed sleeping sweetest
There are three feet in a yard.
Kids need lots of sleep.

Carlos
nation station vacation
[pollution] pollution fiction
direction
Our nation is over two hundred years old.
Short stories are always fiction.
Oil spills cause water pollution.
In the next part of the lesson, reading, the children read aloud to an adult. The reading section has four components:

- **Word, phrase, and sentence lists** for developing accuracy and fluency
- **Text reading** for developing comprehension
- **Repeated Readings** for developing automaticity
- **Reading to children** for developing listening comprehension, vocabulary, and background knowledge

Beginning to read involves forming a link between speech and print. Children must first learn to decode, that is, to associate sounds with letters and blend those sounds into words, and then learn to recognize words automatically. Decoding and word recognition are the foundation of reading comprehension. Without these basic skills, children cannot focus on the meaning of text. Learning disabled children have particular problems developing accurate and fluent reading because of their difficulties with phonologic skills, word retrieval, and visual memory for written words. Therefore, a primary goal of this program is to develop decoding and word recognition.

Decoding and word recognition are best taught using decodable text in which the vocabulary is controlled to contain only previously taught sounds. It is counterproductive to teach children that \( a = /\text{ā}/ \) and then ask them to read the words *cake* and *away*, in which the \( a = /\text{ā}/ \). They need reading material in which they can practice their decoding skills and avoid using inappropriate strategies, such as guessing at unfamiliar words. In the PAF program, decodable text is provided in two forms: (1) word, phrase, and sentence lists in the Stepping Up In Reading books; and (2) stories and nonfiction selections in the Merrill Readers and Merrill Skills Books.

When children are learning to read, they need books with decodable text that allows for the application of word analysis skills. The books should repeat the vocabulary from one selection to the next in order to foster word recognition. Phonetic readers, which control vocabulary and present words according to sound patterns, are the most appropriate type of text to use for this purpose.

PAF uses the Merrill Readers, a series of eight phonetic books, because:

- They are consistently phonetic, even at the higher levels.
- They provide more and longer stories than those in most phonetic readers.
- They are well-paced in the introduction of new material.
- They contain both fiction and nonfiction for teaching a variety of comprehension skills.
If you are not familiar with PAF, you may at first be surprised by the Merrills. They will probably look different from the books you have seen or used. The Merrills have no pictures and are full of simple stories in familiar settings. Clearly, these are not examples of great literature; rather, the Merrills are a means to an end. They are an instructional tool for teaching the skills necessary to read increasingly difficult texts. The reason that the Merrills have no pictures is so that the children are forced to focus on the print and cannot rely on pictures to guess at unfamiliar words (which is an inefficient reading strategy). The stories are simple because the vocabulary is so carefully controlled.

As your students progress through the Merrills, they will begin to read more interesting and varied texts. In fact, by the time they reach the seventh book in the series (or at any time that they demonstrate proficiency), they will be able to start reading chapter books with great confidence and accuracy.

Reading comprehension is part of every lesson. The goals of teaching comprehension are to improve children’s ability to understand information in a particular text and to improve their use of reading strategies that can then be transferred to other reading material. Good readers monitor their comprehension and employ a variety of strategies, such as rereading, to correct misunderstandings. Students benefit from having these strategies taught through direct instruction and modeled by the teacher. Direct instruction is as important in teaching comprehension as it is in teaching decoding.

While the Review, Introduction of New Material, and Spelling portions of the lesson can be done with large groups, it is advantageous to work in smaller groups for reading. This will give each child more opportunity to read aloud under your supervision.

**Word, Phrase, and Sentence Lists**
Children read lists aloud from the Stepping Up In Reading books under teacher supervision.

**Word Lists**
Word lists only contain words with previously taught sounds. Children must apply their decoding skills if they do not recognize a word immediately, because the words are in isolation (with no contextual clues). The word lists provide an opportunity to reinforce sound/symbol associations, teach and practice blending sounds into words, and develop word recognition. They provide the repeated practice needed to help children make the transition from deliberate word reading to recognizing words without conscious effort (word recognition).
There are three types of word lists.
Some word lists reinforce a new phonogram, and every word contains the new sound/symbol association. For example, to teach $u=\overline{u}$, the list includes run, mud, and nuts.

Other word lists reinforce previously taught material. For example, after teaching that silent $e$ makes a vowel long, the mixed word list would include care, line, and these.
\textbf{Phrase and Sentence Lists}

Words introduced on the word lists are reinforced in phrase and sentence lists. Poor readers are often not fluent, instead they read word-by-word. These lists provide practice reading text in meaningful units, provide examples of proper word usage, and enhance both fluency and comprehension.

\textbf{Phrase Lists}

Explain to students that the word combinations on the phrase lists are only parts of sentences and therefore lack punctuation. Tell them that the purpose of reading these phrases is to practice reading in a way that sounds like the way they speak. Model how phrases should be read until the children read them with the proper intonation. As with word lists, phrase lists should be read with the teacher at least two times, with each child taking a turn reading a phrase aloud.

\begin{itemize}
  \item the can's lid
  \item caps and hats
  \item bits of hum
  \item Jim's map
  \item the fan's rim
  \item big sips
  \item cans of wax
  \item six tin cans
  \item the man's pig
  \item in the bags
  \item a cat's pan
  \item tan vans
  \item Kim's hat
  \item hum and yams
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item the brightest star in the sky
  \item a delayed flight
  \item night or light
  \item might or light not
  \item as dark as night
  \item a slight grin
  \item a bolt of lightning
  \item neigh school
  \item three-way light bulbs
  \item thunder and lightning
  \item later tonight
  \item high side
  \item in the spotlight
  \item the figner pilot
  \item day and night
  \item like a mighty bost
  \item fifty lightning bugs
  \item a thigh bone
  \item civil rights
  \item a flight of stairs
  \item the boys firelighters
  \item right school
  \item right-handed
  \item too light
  \item the dim lights
  \item rocket flight
  \item right away
  \item as bright as the sun
  \item the high jump
  \item an amazing nightmare
  \item the flippa recorder
  \item take up a sight
  \item a delightful party
  \item sit right
  \item a light fit
  \item really bright
  \item on the highway
  \item the lady's flashlight
\end{itemize}
Sentence Lists

Sentence lists provide an opportunity to teach children to pay attention to punctuation, such as stopping at periods or pausing at commas, which facilitates reading with expression. Sentence lists also provide practice in reading at an appropriate rate, neither too slowly nor too quickly.

Children should spend approximately fifteen minutes a day, more if needed, reading word, phrase, and sentence lists in their Stepping Up In Reading books with an adult. You should read the new list several times during the lesson and review previous lists if time allows. One technique for getting children to reread lists is to have them search for particular words or text. (Can you find two things that are alive? Which phrase tells you where someone might be?) You will find suggestions for these prompts on the bottom of each list. You can provide additional reading practice by sending the lists home to be read to an adult. Every list should be reread until it is read automatically, at the word recognition level.

Repeated readings develop word recognition and fluency, which are the basis for reading comprehension. The easier it is for children to read the text, the more they can focus on its meaning.
Merrill Readers

After you read with the children in their Stepping Up books, you will read aloud with them from the Merrill Readers. At this point in the lesson, the focus shifts from teaching phonics to teaching comprehension. This shift is possible because of the preparatory work that the children have done in their dictations and Stepping Up books. That work ensures that the children have enough word recognition and fluency to give their full attention to the meaning of the text. There is no need for further discussion about language structure. The ultimate goal of the instruction you do in the Merrill Readers is to give the students the skills they need to read with understanding, independent of a teacher’s questioning and guidance.

Gather the children around a table or in a circle so that they can see each other and you while they read and discuss the book. Children will take turns reading aloud in random order while you stop them to offer corrections or elicit discussions.

In addition to helping children understand the text by asking questions about the content and discussing it, you need to teach them strategies to use when reading on their own. As children begin to monitor their own comprehension and apply reading strategies appropriately, they become independent learners.

Examples of some research-based strategies include:

**Visualizing**

Constructing mental images has been proven to be a helpful strategy for young children when they are reading fiction. Encourage children to make a picture in their head as they read. You can draw pictures on the board while reading with the children to show them how written words can be translated into images.

**Predicting**

Encourage students to make logical predictions as they read, and then have them stop periodically to verify whether they are right or wrong. Some chapter titles lend themselves to predictions (Eggs for a Cake might be about a bake sale, a party, or a cooking lesson); other titles do not (Spelling, Bugs, and Plants). Examples of the types of predictions students may make while reading include how a character will solve a problem or what might happen next. Predictions do not have to be correct, but they must be logical.

**Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing is an especially important reading strategy, because when readers put ideas into their own words, they understand and remember them better. Also, beginning readers have thousands more words in their spoken vocabularies than they are able to read. This is especially true when the children are using texts with highly controlled vocabularies – the discrepancy between what they can read and what they can say is vast.
You should encourage the children to discuss the text using their own words. Can you think of another way to say that? What did Gus mean when he said Pam couldn’t get a pet yet? You particularly want to ask your students to paraphrase difficult sentences or concepts in the text. Similarly, you should be paraphrasing as you lead the discussions. When the text says, Dan was mad, ask, Why was Dan so angry? When the text says, Kim has a bad cut on her leg, ask, How did she get injured?

Remember, the reading vocabulary has to be controlled for beginning readers, but the language used to discuss the text can be varied and sophisticated.

• **Retelling and Summarizing**

  Before you introduce the concept of summarizing, the children will need lots of practice retelling stories, demonstrating that they remember details accurately and can put them in the proper order. Ask the children, What happened? at the end of the story.

  Summarizing is a crucial but difficult skill that develops over years. To summarize, children must determine what is important and put that information into their own words. Over time, you should encourage the children to leave out unimportant or redundant details and focus on the main idea. Only after years of teacher modeling and feedback can children be expected to create summaries independently. The chapters in the novels that are read at the end of the Instructional Sequence provide excellent material for teaching and practicing summarizing.

When children do not understand the text, teach them to use one of these fix-up strategies:

• **Rereading**

  Encourage children to go back to the text when they are confused, rather than having another child give the correct answer. When reading nonfiction, insist that children go back to the text to verify new information. Where did the author say that?

• **Asking for help**

  Try to create an environment in which children feel comfortable asking questions about what they do not understand. Be sure to convey to your class that good readers always ask for help when they do not understand something.

When children make errors while reading aloud, their errors must be immediately corrected. Here are some common reading errors and examples of how to make corrections:

• If a child misreads a phonetic word, point to the misread word as a signal to the child to sound it out again.

• If a child misreads a red word, have him skywrite the word to trigger the correct response.

• If a child cannot read a word that contains a sound that has not been taught, say the word for the child. For example, supply the word look while children are learning short vowels.
• If a child skips words or loses his place, encourage him to run his finger in a continuous motion under the text (finger gliding). Finger gliding can improve accuracy by helping the child focus his attention.

• If a child struggles with a word or reads a sentence word-by-word, have him reread the entire sentence. If the meaning of the sentence has been lost because of labored decoding, reread it for the group before calling on the next reader.

• If the meaning of a word is problematic, simply paraphrase or clarify the word quickly and continue with the story. When a child reads, *It is the dairy’s job to kill the bacteria*, say: *So the dairy kills the bacteria—the germs—in the milk.*

Because all eight Merrill Readers have the same set of main characters and the same setting, a character chart is a useful graphic organizer. Displaying the chart will help the children learn the characters and their relationships. Beginning with the second Merrill Reader, Dig In, and continuing through the fourth reader, Get Set, you can add each major character to the chart as he or she is introduced. The character chart can be used before, during, or after the lesson, depending on the particular story and lesson goals.

For some lessons, the reading material will come from the Merrill Skills Books that accompany each reader. These Skills Books should also be read with an adult for additional reading practice and not assigned as independent work.

The Skills Books offer you the opportunity to teach a range of language skills that are not taught in the readers, such as changing questions to statements, classification, synonyms, and antonyms. The Skills Books reinforce the vocabulary in the readers while providing different types of text, such as tables and graphs. Many of the pages can be done by having the children answer orally or circling the answers rather than writing them.
Repeated Readings
Rereading to an adult is an excellent strategy for improving accuracy, word recognition, and fluency. Therefore, the children should practice reading with someone at home every night. Each day you should send home lists from Stepping Up In Reading and stories from the Merrill Readers. For children without someone to read to at home or who need extra practice, be sure to provide more opportunities to read to an adult in school.

Once the children have graduated from the Merrills to chapter books, their reading homework should no longer involve rereading text. Rereading chapters disrupts the momentum of the story. Instead, have children read the next chapter or chapters independently for homework. You should review the chapters read at home in class the following day before reading the next chapter aloud with the children.

Reading to the Children
Set aside time each day to read aloud to the students from a variety of children’s literature and nonfiction. Reading aloud is essential to help beginning readers develop comprehension, because it expands their background knowledge and exposes them to language that is more sophisticated than what they can read themselves. For children who are reading decodable text, reading aloud is also an opportunity to introduce them to a range of genres and text structures. Reading to children allows them to experience reading not only as a skill to be mastered, but as an ongoing source of information and pleasure. This in turn motivates them to become independent readers. Try to read to your class everyday but remember that reading to children should never replace the critical time spent reading with them.

Children should be reading aloud to an adult every day.
Daily Lesson

Review
Introduction of New Material
Spelling Dictation
Reading
Reinforcement

Reinforcement

Each lesson concludes with activities for independent seat work or homework. What follows are some general suggestions for reinforcement activities that can be used at any point in the sequence.

Have the children reread a story in their Merrill Reader and complete one of the following activities:

- For Books A-C, illustrate the story.
- For Books D-H, answer one or two comprehension questions.
- For nonfiction selections in Books E-H, locate facts and write them in sentences.
On days when your students have read pages in the Merrill Skills Books and done the activities orally, you may choose to have them answer the questions in writing as a reinforcement activity.

At every stage in the sequence, you should send home lists from Stepping Up for the children to read aloud to an adult. In addition, you can use Stepping Up to create assignments, such as having the children find words on the word lists that fit into certain categories, or asking them to use words from the lists in sentences.

There are certain activities that should never be used for reinforcement. For example, never ask your students to write their spelling words multiple times, to do word searches, or to unscramble misspelled words. These activities have little to no instructional value, and they are especially inappropriate for children with learning issues.

While doing reinforcement activities at school or home, it is important for your students to spell words correctly even if that means asking for help from adults. Spelling words incorrectly reinforces errors. If a child asks for help spelling a word, either ask him to sound out the word (if it is composed of sounds he knows) or tell him how to spell it. It is better that you or a parent spells words for the child than for him to practice writing them incorrectly.

Finally, you can use the phonics books Explode the Code #1-3 to reinforce your lessons. These books, like all PAF materials, can be ordered from Educators Publishing Service. On the PAF website, you can find and download a form that lists which pages in the Explode the Code books can be used at which levels in the instructional sequence.
Sample Lesson Sequence

Here is how the daily lesson would look for the introduction of the sound /ĕ/.

1. Review  Do a review of previously taught sounds, red words, and suffixes using the review pack.

2. Introduction of New Material  Then teach the sound using the keyword from the Alphabet Picture Cards.

You also teach the motor pattern for writing the letter using the Handwriting Program for Print.

3. Spelling Dictation  Give a dictation with the new sound, using words and a sentence you have selected from the Teacher Handbook.
4. Reading  Now read with the children. First you will read words and phrases with the new sound in Stepping Up In Reading to practice decoding, word recognition, and reading fluency.

Then read stories with the new sound in the Merrill Reader for additional reading practice and to teach comprehension strategies.

5. Reinforcement  As a final reinforcement activity, you might ask the children to reread the story independently and illustrate it.
This section of the handbook contains directions for using the instructional sequence, ideas for lesson planning, an overview of what is taught in PAF, and the full instructional sequence.

PAF must be taught in a step-by-step progression, with students learning each step before progressing to the next. Every level in the sequence builds on the skills and concepts taught in previous levels. When properly implemented, the program should take approximately three years to complete, although the exact length of time will depend on your students’ abilities and the amount of time allocated for reading instruction. In general, each level in this program will require more than one day of instruction to complete. There is no set formula, however, for how long to spend at a given level. Some levels take longer than others, particularly when the material is complex. On most days you will find that there is no new material to introduce and the lesson will focus on review, practice, and reinforcement of prior material.

Every level in the instructional sequence lists the skills and concepts to be taught, materials to be used, words and sentences to be used for spelling dictations, and specific teaching instructions.

The words on each list have been controlled to contain only the sounds children have already learned. The sentences are composed of words the children can sound out and of previously taught red words. Keep in mind that you do not have to dictate every word and sentence listed at a given level. Only dictate as many as necessary to teach the skill.

On the next page you will find one example of a level in the sequence.
As you proceed through the curriculum, you will find levels marked for reading only. The concepts presented for reading only are to be practiced using the Stepping Up in Reading books and Merrill Readers but are not included in dictations.

Keep in mind that while there are no new words for dictation at a for reading only level, some teachers use the opportunity to give a review dictation of previously misspelled words. It is up to you, based on the specific needs of your students, whether to give a review dictation at this level or to skip it to focus only on the reading.

Finally, the instructional sequence will tell you when to stop to give proficiency tests. Remember, the success of this program depends on completing the sequence in order without omissions. This includes administering the proficiency tests when indicated. Your students’ performance on the proficiency tests will help you determine when they need more opportunities for review and when you can proceed to a new level.
## CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The Curriculum Overview is a summary of when skills are taught in the sequence. The summary does not, however, list reading comprehension strategies, because they are taught throughout the sequence rather than at any one particular level. These include: visualizing, predicting, paraphrasing, summarizing, and rereading. Beginning with Book G, underlining and note-taking are introduced as well. Language concepts—for example, multiple-meaning words, idioms, pronoun referents, and categorization—also spiral through the sequence. Finally, whenever possible, the children are made aware of text structures, such as: problem and solution, sequence of events, list of facts, cause and effect, and compare and contrast.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS</th>
<th>Levels 1-74</th>
<th>Levels 75-129</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Book A (I Can)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Book D (Get Set)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Book B (Dig In)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Book E (Step Up)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Book C (Catch On)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PHONOGAMS</strong></td>
<td>alphabet</td>
<td>initial and final blends</td>
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<td>short vowels</td>
<td>-ng, -nk</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ch, sh, th</td>
<td>triple blends</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ve</td>
<td>ar, or -all</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-y = ı/</td>
<td>-ll, -ss, -ff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>open syllable words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RED WORDS</strong></td>
<td>a said from</td>
<td>don’t one off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I of were</td>
<td>won’t none walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the are very</td>
<td>who done talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to they do</td>
<td>school there where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you put goes</td>
<td>want some friend</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>your was</td>
<td>what come full</td>
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<td><strong>SYLLABICATION</strong></td>
<td>open syllables</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>closed syllables</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>r-controlled syllables</td>
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<td>syllable division:</td>
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<td>VCCV</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VCV</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MISCELLANEOUS</strong></td>
<td>capitalization</td>
<td>contractions</td>
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<td><strong>CONCEPTS</strong></td>
<td>final punctuation</td>
<td>synonyms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>word families</td>
<td>antonyms</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plural s</td>
<td>suffixes: -ed, -er, -est, -es, -ful, -less</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>possessive s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-s (verb form)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>compound words</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>abbreviations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>root words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suffixes: -ing, -ed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CURRICULUM OVERVIEW (continued)

| LEVELS | Levels 130-158  
|        | Book F (Lift Off) | Levels 159-186  
|        |                  | Book G (Take Flight) | Levels 187-215  
|        |                  | Book H (Break Through)  
|        |                  | Chapter Books |
| PHONOGAMS | silent e vowels  
|          | long vowel teams | -en | -rr  
|          | igh | -et | o = /ɔ/ |
|          | wh- | -ore | ea = /e/ |
|          | -y = /i/ | soft c | ea = /æ/ |
|          | a = /ʊ/ | soft g | ear = /ər/ |
|          | -age | wr, kn | au, aw |
|          | eigh | twin consonants | silent b, h, and t |
|          | -ild, -ind | -old, -ost, old | oo = /ʊʊ/ |
|          | -old, -ost, old | -ew = /iʊ/ | /ʊʊ/ |
|          | er, ir, ur, | ou, ui, ue = /ʊʊ/ |
|          | ou, ow = /ou/ | ie = /e/ | /ɪ/ |
|          | al = /al/ | oi, oy | /aʊ/, /ɔɪ/ |
|          | w(or) = /wer/ | aught, ought | /aʊ/ |
|          | w(ar) = /wor | gu- | /gə/ |

| RED WORDS | could | been | woman | father |
|           | would | does | women | tough |
|           | should | pretty | once | buy |
|           | their | only | many | enough |
|           | sure | again | laugh | half |
|           | because | against | together | ocean |
|           | says | | people | rough |
|           | | | water | island |
|           | | | build | Wednesday |

| SPELLING RULES | silent e rule  
|                | -ck |
|                | doubling rule | -dge |
|                | y rule | adding s to y words |

| SYLLABICATION | silent e syllables | syllable division: |
|              | vowel team syllables | VCCCV |
|              | special syllable | endings |
|              | multisyllable root | words |
|              | words |

| MISCELLANEOUS CONCEPTS | nouns | -tion |
|                        | verbs | -sion |
|                        | adjectives | -ture |
|                        | adverbs | -ain |
|                        | homonyms | |
|                        | suffixes: -y, -ly | |
LEVEL 34

i (igloo)

The contraction *it’s* appears in the reader. Simply explain to the children that *it’s* stands for the words *it* and *is*. The concept of contractions is not introduced until Level 76.

Remove *is* from your review pack and the Red Word Chart.

```
if     big     dig     lip
in     hit     fit     tin
it     him     hid     pit
is     sit     pin     bit
did    his     pig     rip
```

Dan hid the pin.
Sam sits in his van.
The map has a big rip.
Dad digs a big pit.
Rags is as big as a pig.
The pigs fit in the van.

After working with the new vowel for two or three lessons, do a divided dictation in which children have to distinguish between the two vowels they have learned, *á* and *í*. Have them fold their papers in half and write an *a* at the top of one column and an *í* at the top of the second column. Tell the children to listen for the vowel sound and decide in which column to write each word. Dictate the following words in this order: *dad*, *bag*, *it*, *at*, *big*, *did*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**LEVEL 42**  
Print Book 76-77  
Stepping Up 28  
Reader 35-38  
Skills Book 27-32

z (zebra)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>zip</th>
<th>zigzag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Jim zips his bag.  
The rip is a zigzag.  
The kids ran in a zigzag.  
Can you zip it?  
Jan ran zigzag.  
Did Sam zip the bag?

**LEVEL 43**  
Print Book 78-79  
Stepping Up 29-30  
Reader 39-42  
Skills Book 33-36 (omit 37)

Capital P

| Pat Jim’s cat.  
| Pigs can nap.  
| Pam is a kid.  
| Pat the cat in your lap.  
| Pam’s kit is in your van.  
| Pigs can sit in a pit. |

**LEVEL 44**  
Print Book 31-32  
Stepping Up 43-46  
Reader 39-42 (omit 38)

u (umbrella)

| up | bus | cut | tub |
| us | mud | rug | cub |
| run | sun | tug | gum |
| but | bug | nut | hug |
| fun | cup | rub | dug |

It is fun to run in the sun.  
Rags runs to us.  
Pam has nuts and gum.  
Can Pam zip it up?  
Is Sid’s van as big as a bus?  
Did the bugs run to the cup?

After working with the new vowel for two or three lessons, do a divided dictation in which children have to distinguish between the three vowels they have learned, ā, ĭ, and ū. Prefold their paper into thirds. Have them write one vowel at the top of each column. Tell children to listen for the vowel sound and decide in which column to write each word. Dictate these words: big, fan, but, bug, pin, fun, hat, bag, hit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Book F presents some new challenges for your students. Until now, the children have been learning letters and letter combinations for which there is just one sound, such as p=/p/ or sh=/sh/. Now they will learn that some sounds can be spelled in multiple ways. For example, all the common long vowels can be spelled with a magic e that is silent (cake, hike) or by using a vowel team (rain, leaf).

In order to spell words with long vowel sounds, your students will need to choose the correct spelling from a number of possibilities. There are common spelling patterns that you can teach your class that will help them make reasonable choices. Certain phonograms come only at the beginning or middle of a word, such as oa (boat), while others come at the end of a word, such as ow (snow). With these patterns in mind, the children can figure out which phonogram to use when they do not remember how a word is spelled. For example, with the word throw, they would sound out the initial consonants, then choose ow for the /ō/ sound, because it comes at the end of the word.

To help the children learn the various ways to spell long vowel sounds, you should display Spelling Choice Charts in your classroom. Using these charts, the children can make reasonable spelling choices when they do not know how to spell a word. After teaching each long vowel phonogram, add it to the chart. By the end of Book F, your charts will look like this:
LEVEL 132

Red Words: could, would, should

As each of these red words is introduced, teach the corresponding not contraction, couldn’t, wouldn’t, and shouldn’t. Review how not contractions are formed, by dropping the o and adding an apostrophe.

I could try baking a cake.
Could we take a later train?
Dave couldn’t go on the school trip.
Jane couldn’t finish drinking her milk.

Mom would go to the game if she could.
Jane said that she would call her friend later.
Wouldn’t it be safer to cross at the corner?
I wish you wouldn’t be so careless with my games.

Should you swim in a thunderstorm?
We should save some cake for later.
Kids shouldn’t run in the hall.
You shouldn’t brag to your friends.

LEVEL 133

Now you will teach the third spelling of the long i sound. Previously the children have learned to spell long i with an i as in tiger (an open syllable) and with a y as in fly. In this lesson, they will learn that i-e spells i as in nine. Download the Spelling Choice Chart for long i with the first three spellings visible.

Here is what you should do:
• Teach the next magic e pattern the same way you taught a-e at Level 130.
  Use the following list of words.
   rip
   pin
   rid
   quit
   spin

• Next you will do a dictation.
  Dictate hid and ask the children how they would change the word to hide.
  Dictate fin and have the children change it to fine.
  Dictate dim and have the children change it to dime.
You are going to introduce four sets of homonyms in this lesson.

**Here’s what you should do:**

- Review the meaning of homonyms.

- Introduce *male* and *mail*, discussing the meaning of each word.

- Dictate *mail* and *male* two or three times each in a mixed-up order. Remind the children they have to wait until you use the word in a sentence to choose the correct spelling.

- Dictate one or two sentences with the new homonyms.

- Repeat this procedure with the remaining sets of words.

**male-mail**

Male spiders are smaller than females.
The mail comes even when it is raining.
Is their pet snake male or female?
Jane painted the mailboxes.

**sale-sail**

What are you making for the bake sale?
We couldn’t go sailing because of the storm.
Sails are like wings that make ships go.
Jake got a pair of chairs at the yard sale.

**tale-tail**

Who is the hero of that tale?
A tiger’s tail is quite long.
Planes have wings and a tail.
Can you think of a tall tale?

**plane-plain**

Their plane landed late because of the rain.
Jane put on a plain dress.
Who invented the airplane?
Plains are flat and have tall grasses.

Add these eight words to your homonym pack and shuffle the cards so the same homonyms do not follow each other.
By the time you get to Book H, some of the children will still need the Merrill Readers, and they will continue in the sequence as it is written. Other children, those who can read text containing sounds you have not yet taught, will be ready to leave the controlled readers for chapter books.

In order to determine if children are ready to leave the Merrills, have them read the first page in the book *Hannah*, by Gloria Whelan. If they can read the page with fewer than six errors, they are ready for chapter books and can begin to read *Hannah* with you. Otherwise they should continue to read in Book H. All your students will read chapter books before they finish the instructional sequence.

Although the children may be reading different books, they will still do their dictations as a group and will all read Stepping Up in Reading and their books with you. The only change in routine should be that the children reading chapter books now do their Skills Books independently.

Once your students begin reading chapter books, you will need to use the same care in preparing and implementing reading comprehension lessons that you used with the Merrill Readers. Begin by prereading the chapter book. Decide what the book is about. What is the theme or main idea? What problems do the characters face, and how do they attempt to solve these problems? Does the book have a moral (for fiction) or does it teach new information (for nonfiction)? Be sure to ask yourself if there is any background information or vocabulary that is critical to understanding the book. Plan your lessons, chapter by chapter, using the same reading format—before, during, after—that you used in your prior comprehension lessons.

With chapter books, it is important to read at a pace that will keep the narrative moving along in order to sustain interest. Continue to have your students read aloud each day in class, and assign the next part of the story each night for homework. Reading homework should take approximately a half hour. As part of each reading assignment, send home one or two written questions for your students to answer. This will allow you to monitor if they are doing the reading and understanding the story. Begin each lesson with a discussion of what was read at home in order to address any comprehension issues. Have the students summarize what they have read and make logical predictions about what might happen in the next chapter.
I read that it is healthy to exercise.
Heavy sweaters and gloves keep you warm in cold weather.
Does a ton of feathers weigh more than a ton of bricks?
Our teacher always walks ahead of the class.
Nothing smells as wonderful as freshly baked bread.
My father already put the heavy box on the front seat.

So far the children have learned two rules for adding suffixes to root words: the Silent e Rule and the Doubling Rule. Now you will teach the Y Rule, which explains how and when to change the spelling of a root word ending in the letter y.

Here’s the rule:
In words ending with the letter y preceded by a consonant, change the y to i and add the suffix unless the suffix begins with an i (cried, crying). For the first time, it does not matter whether the suffix begins with a vowel or a consonant.

Teach this lesson in two parts. First, teach the children the general rule that if there is a consonant before the y, they must change the y to an i and add the suffix. Then, after the children practice spelling words, show them the one exception: the y does not change if the suffix begins with an i.

Here’s what you should do:
• Help the children figure out the Y Rule by having them look at the following words. Ask, What happened to the y when I added the suffixes?
  
  try + ed = tried
  fly + er = flier
  carry + ed = carried

• Download and use this form for a dictation. Remind the children that if there is a consonant before the y, they change y to an i when adding a suffix. Dictate hurried. (Hurried: We hurried to catch the train.)

• Ask the children what the root word is and have them write hurry in the first column.

• Ask what the suffix is and have them write it in the second column.
Words that end with -tion are nouns. This syllable is tricky to spell because ti represents the sound /sh/ and the /û/ is written with a scribal o. When reading words that end with -tion, teach the children to take off the syllable and then divide as usual. The i before -tion will always say /ĭ/.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nation</th>
<th>station</th>
<th>pollution</th>
<th>direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fiction</td>
<td>vacation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Short stories are always fiction.
Nonfiction is about real people and true events.
Do you enjoy eating food that comes from other nations?
Can you point me in the direction of the train station?
Many families take summer vacations.
There are laws to try to prevent pollution.

Your students have finished the Merrill Readers and are ready for chapter books. The following three titles are an excellent transition to uncontrolled text: Absolutely Lucy, by Ilene Cooper and Amanda Harvey; and The Chalk Box Kid, and The Paint Brush Kid, both by Clyde Robert Bulla.

LEVEL 206

Silent Letters

This level includes the special syllable ending -stle. Remember that i and o often make their long sound when followed by two consonants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>silent b</th>
<th>silent h</th>
<th>silent t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comb</td>
<td>hour</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>climb</td>
<td>honest</td>
<td>listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thumb</td>
<td>ghost</td>
<td>castle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A castle is one of the pieces in a chess set.
Do you believe in ghosts?
How many hours are in a day?
It took the hikers hours to climb to the highest point.
You shouldn’t feel guilty about an honest mistake.
My brother often enjoys listening to jazz.
PROFICIENCY TESTS

To ensure your students’ success in this program, it is essential that you maintain the proper pace of instruction. From time to time, you will need to stop teaching so that you can evaluate how your students are doing. Your evaluations will take two forms: informal observations of your students’ classroom performance and formal assessment through a series of curriculum-based proficiency tests. The evaluation process will guide your instructional planning by highlighting when to reteach key concepts or skills, when a student should be moved to a different reading group, or if the group is ready to continue in the sequence.

The handbook contains a total of thirteen proficiency tests, each with a spelling and reading section, and each administered over several days. The spelling section contains lists of phonograms, phonetic words, red words, and sentences for dictation. The reading section consists of phonograms, phonetic words, red words, and passages of text for students to read aloud. The instructional sequence will let you know when to stop and administer a test.

For each student, record a summary of your classroom observations and the proficiency test results on the Proficiency Test Summary Form that can be found on page 153 or downloaded from the PAF website. In scoring the proficiency tests, focus on the kinds and patterns of errors your students make. With the exception of red words, you do not need to jot down specific words that students misspell, only the area of confusion. For example, if a child writes or reads pen for pin, make note of the i/e confusion, not the words pen and pin.

Create an assessment folder for each student in which you keep completed tests and the Proficiency Test Summary Forms. These folders will serve as a record of your students’ progress and as a useful resource to share with parents.

What follows here is more-detailed information about administering and scoring the two parts of the test.
I. Spelling

w x ī z ū qu b ā y p f h d n l v t r g s m

big him but wax hit zip
if quiz live quit wins runs

Fix Jim’s cup.
Are they in the bus?
Give us six of his bags.
I said to put it up.
Did your kids have fun?

II. Oral Reading

Single Word Reading (See following page.)

Text Reading: Merrill Skills Book – *Dig In*, page 93
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>big</th>
<th>sun</th>
<th>us</th>
<th>mix</th>
<th>lives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>if</td>
<td>dug</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>hit</td>
<td>wags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up</td>
<td>did</td>
<td>run</td>
<td>give</td>
<td>hugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his</td>
<td>but</td>
<td>zip</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>wins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bus</td>
<td>six</td>
<td>fun</td>
<td>quit</td>
<td>kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>put</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>said</td>
<td>of</td>
<td>are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Spelling

û sh qu ô -ank ch ê -ink î -unk ā

Write the suffix that means more. (-er)
Write the past time suffix. (-ed)
Write the doer suffix. (-er)
Write the two suffixes that mean more than one. (-s, -es)

milk help best ask left must
next thank gifts faster lasted melted

Don’t go into the school by yourself.
I think they fixed the fish tank.
Mrs. Sands wants to go to the bank.
Who just bumped into me?
Ben said he wanted a desk.

II. Oral Reading

Single Word Reading (See following page.)

Text Reading: Merrill Skills Book – Get Set, page 120

Question #19: Ask the child to draw a circle around the sentence that tells what the whole story is about.

Question #20: Ask the child to draw a circle around the words that complete the sentence and tell what happened in the story.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>ch</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>th</th>
<th>o</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sh</td>
<td>ink</td>
<td>ang</td>
<td>unk</td>
<td>ank</td>
<td>ong</td>
<td>ung</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>must</th>
<th>desk</th>
<th>longer</th>
<th>summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>help</td>
<td>felt</td>
<td>landed</td>
<td>better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>camp</td>
<td>think</td>
<td>jumped</td>
<td>contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just</td>
<td>herself</td>
<td>banker</td>
<td>after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left</td>
<td>pitcher</td>
<td>melted</td>
<td>dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>west</td>
<td>thanked</td>
<td>quicker</td>
<td>dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>missed</td>
<td>under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>junk</td>
<td>asked</td>
<td>faster</td>
<td>winter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| want | were | who | was |
I. Spelling

grew    hours    drew    thumb    often    nature
honest   picture  future  castle   threw    avenue

Are you certain that the newspapers are tied up?
The water was too rough to take a boat ride around the island.
Is it true that only a few students could solve the new puzzle?
The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans border the United States.
Does listening to ghost stories scare you?
Are you tough enough to go on a mountain climbing adventure?

Have the students write the months of the year in sequence.

II. Oral Reading

Single Word Reading

Text Reading: Have the child read to you the next section of the book you are using in class. Read at least one full page but less than a whole chapter of the book you are using in class. Be sure the child stops at a logical place in the narrative. Ask one or two questions to check comprehension.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>comb</th>
<th>daughter</th>
<th>exhibit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>juice</td>
<td>whistle</td>
<td>continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knew</td>
<td>mountain</td>
<td>protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>guilty</td>
<td>jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fruit</td>
<td>thoughtful</td>
<td>paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caught</td>
<td>rescued</td>
<td>conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brought</td>
<td>softened</td>
<td>transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honor</td>
<td>honesty</td>
<td>alphabetize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fasten</td>
<td>overdue</td>
<td>manufacture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plumber</td>
<td>decision</td>
<td>population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>castle</td>
<td>permission</td>
<td>temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certain</td>
<td>signature</td>
<td>imagination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>island</th>
<th>ocean</th>
<th>enough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rough</td>
<td>toughest</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

PROFICIENCY TEST #13
APPENDIX

Handwriting

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Basic Principles
Handwriting is an essential part of a multisensory curriculum. Early in the program, you will need to teach your students how to write each letter as they learn its sound. Until they can form all letters accurately and automatically, you should provide ongoing instruction and opportunities for supervised practice. The following pages contain specific instructions for teaching print and cursive.

There are six basic principles of handwriting instruction.
1. Each letter is introduced with the motor pattern and the sound in order to develop a strong automatic connection between three modalities: visual (letter form), auditory (letter sounds), and kinesthetic (how to write the letter). The simultaneous teaching of motor patterns and sounds is a key component of multisensory instruction.

2. Handwriting is taught and practiced under the direct supervision of the teacher, who provides immediate feedback and models correct letter formation. Handwriting is never assigned as independent work or homework.

3. The instructional sequence for teaching handwriting is trace, copy, and write from memory. Children trace the letter, copy the letter, and, to complete the lesson, write the letter from memory, all under the direction of the teacher.

4. Motor patterns are always introduced through the large muscles of the arm and shoulder rather than through the small muscles of the hand. Using large muscles helps children feel the changes in direction necessary to form each letter. Also, using large muscles helps children remember letter formations, because large muscle memory is extremely powerful. You never forget how to ride a bike or swim.

5. Letters are grouped according to motor patterns. For example, one group of letters is referred to as two o’clock letters, because each letter in the group is formed by starting at the 2 on an imaginary clock. The two o’clock letters are c, a, d, g, q, s, and f.

6. Language is used to teach and reinforce handwriting by having the teacher verbalize instructions for forming each letter. Children are told how to move their hands to produce the letter forms. Many children cannot learn the motor patterns for writing by simply copying letters and must receive verbal instructions.
In order to give verbal instructions on how to form the letters, you will need to establish certain reference points with your class. First, be sure all the desks in the classroom are facing forward. Next, using cloth tape, place a green line on the side of the board and on every desk. In classrooms with group tables rather than individual desks, give each student a 12-by-18-inch oaktag mat and place a green line on the left side. When giving verbal instructions, you will be able to tell your students to move their hands toward or away from the green, rather than to the left or right.

Also, to help you give verbal instructions, you will need a way to refer to each of the writing lines. In the handwriting books, the four writing lines have been given names: hat line, belt line, writing line, and shoe line. By teaching these names to your students and referring to them in your verbal instructions, you will help the children form letters with proper size and placement. For example, you may instruct the students to place their pencils on the belt line and pull down to the writing line. Be sure that your classroom board is marked with the same four writing lines and with a green line to the left.

Although the exact wording of the verbal instructions may vary from teacher to teacher, it is important that your own instructions remain consistent. As your students begin to form letters accurately and automatically, you can give less detailed instructions. Eventually stop giving instructions altogether.

**Teaching Print**

Because this is a multisensory program, you will need to teach each motor pattern along with the sound of the letter, following the instructions on pages 9 and 10. When teaching print, you will use three different kinds of writing paper, each one requiring your students to produce smaller letters. On the first kind of paper, the lines are ruled ½" apart and the paper is aligned horizontally so that young students can place an entire sentence on one line.
Teaching Cursive

You should start teaching cursive in the beginning of third grade, regardless of where your children are in the Instructional Sequence. Since the children will already know the sounds of the letters, cursive instruction is not part of the daily multisensory lesson. You should set aside time for separate cursive lessons. While your students are learning cursive, they will continue to work through the Instructional Sequence, completing their written work in print.

Many of the basic principles used in teaching print apply to teaching cursive as well: students should work under the supervision of a teacher; group letters by motor pattern; introduce the letters by having students use large muscles; give verbal instructions and have the children trace, copy, and then write the letters from memory. One difference in teaching cursive is that the children will say the letter name rather than its sound while learning the motor patterns.

As when teaching print, arrange all the desks in your classroom facing forward, and be sure your students use proper posture and pencil grip. Have them orient their papers at a forty-five-degree angle from the edge of their desks and parallel to their writing arms. Most right-handed children produce letters slanting toward the right-hand corner of the page; most left-handed children produce letters slanting toward the left-hand corner. The direction of the slant of the letters is less important than its consistency: always to the right corner or always to the left. To accommodate the needs of both your left- and right-handed students, the Handwriting Program for Cursive books come in two versions. The books are identical except for the slant of the letters.

The handwriting books begin by teaching the twenty-six lower-case letters. While your students are learning these letters, they should use $\frac{3}{8}$" ruled paper for extra practice. Once the students know all the lower-case letters, they should begin doing spelling dictations (and gradually all their written work in cursive, using $\frac{3}{16}$" ruled paper). You may have to shorten dictations until your students can produce cursive, letters quickly and accurately. Your students can print the capital letters until they have learned the motor patterns.

While the children are making the transition from print, you can give them homework in which they copy printed text into cursive. They can practice copying their red words, and you can supply a short paragraph for them to copy. Be sure to give them the $\frac{3}{16}$" paper for this practice.
Lesson Plans

This section contains four blank lesson plan forms for your use, which can be downloaded, and three sample lessons. You will select one of the first three blank lesson plan forms, depending on which level you are teaching. They vary slightly in content: for example, the lesson plan for Levels 1 to 55 includes words to spell with the pocket chart, while the other two lesson plans do not. The fourth blank lesson plan form is to use when teaching any red word.

Each lesson plan form has five sections that correspond to the sequence of the daily lesson.

• **Review**: This section is simply a reminder to do the review using the card packs.
• **Introduction of New Material**: Jot down any materials you might need.
• **Spelling Dictation**: Write the words and sentences you have selected for dictation. You do not have to use all the spaces provided on the form. You can also use the lesson plan to keep track of errors.
• **Reading**: This is a place to record the pages you want to read with the children. You will write your questions and prompts for discussion directly in the Merrill Reader, not on this form.
• **Reinforcement**: Write down any activities and attach work sheets you plan to use.

After the four blank lesson plan forms you will find three sample lessons that demonstrate how to fill out these blank forms and how to create the comprehension lesson in the Merrill Reader.

**Sample Lesson Plan I**
This lesson introduces the short vowel *i*. At this early stage in the sequence, when the children are learning how to form the letters, the dictations are shorter than they will be later. That is why only one sentence has been chosen for dictation. The lesson for the story “Nat and the Map” has been planned around the main idea of a problem (Nat destroys Sam’s map). Since the author offers no solution, the story lends itself to asking the children for a logical next step for Sam.
Sample Lesson Plan II
This lesson introduces the letter y making the sound /ɪ/ at the end of a one-syllable word. Because there are only two pattern words, two sentences have been included for dictation. “Grandma’s Story” is a version of “Henny Penny” (or “Chicken Little”) and an excellent opportunity to present this classic fable. First, the children read the Merrill version and retell the narrative in sequence. Then read an illustrated version of “Henny Penny” to them. The lesson concludes with a discussion of which version of the story the children like better and why.

Sample Lesson Plan III
This lesson is about learning to use twin consonants in the middle of two-syllable root words. “Different Kinds of Apes” is a nonfiction selection that offers the opportunity to model comprehension strategies, such as taking notes. As the children are reading the selection aloud, stop after each type of ape is described to ask the children what they have learned. Then, model converting the facts to notes on the board. The children can use the notes to verbally summarize what they have learned. The reinforcement activity requires them to go back to the text for specific information.
### Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities


**Teaching Reading**


—. Report of the National Reading Panel: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction. April 2000. nationalreadingpanel.org.


Reading Fluency


Reading Comprehension


Spelling/Handwriting


