The Early Reading Accelerators' Quick Start Guide

Literacy opens the doors to learn about ourselves and the world, to become changemakers in our communities, and to pursue our dreams. This begins with ensuring that each child learns how to read.

What are the Early Reading Accelerators?

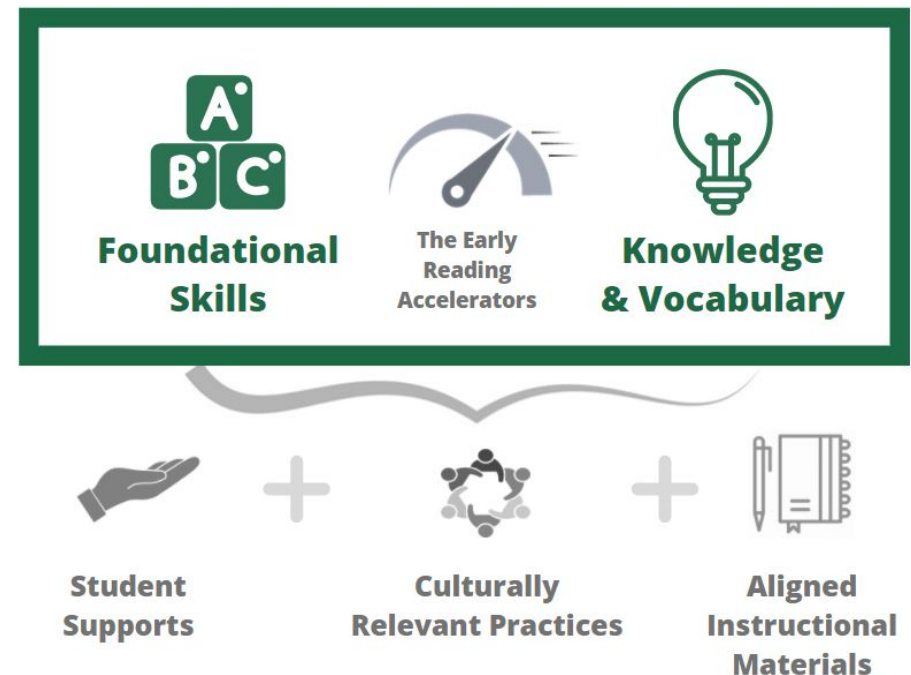**Foundational Skills**

Knowledge & Vocabulary

Reading science emphasizes two critical pieces of early reading instruction: systematically **securing foundational skills[1]** and **building knowledge and vocabulary[2]**. These "Early Reading Accelerators" are essential content that all readers need access to in order to become proficient readers, and any effective classroom instruction or materials will intentionally amplify these two areas. While each student and their experiences are unique, we can accelerate the development of reading proficiency for all students by implementing these practices strategically.

Despite this settled science, too many students are denied strong instruction with these key, research-based elements. How do we ensure that we are teaching Early Reading Accelerators' content to all students, while also centering students whose academic needs are not being met by school?

Making the Early Reading Accelerators an Equitable Practice

Reading science has shown us *what* needs to be amplified in early reading, but for this practice to be equitable for students, we must also address the *how*.

Many students need support with reading, but students of color, students from families experiencing poverty, and English learners are less likely to have access to resources that facilitate reading success, including: effective instructional practices[3], appropriate individualized supports[4], or teachers[5] and materials[6] that reflect their own identities. To implement the Early Reading Accelerators equitably, we also must consider **student supports**, **culturally relevant content** and **practices**, and a**ligned instructional materials**. This means that we have a deep knowledge of the accelerators (foundational skills and building knowledge & vocabulary), *and* instruct in ways and with content that value students' backgrounds, languages, cultures, points of view, knowledge, and skills.

Foundational Skills — The Early Reading Accelerators — **Knowledge & Vocabulary**

Student Supports + **Culturally Relevant Practices** + **Aligned Instructional Materials**

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[1] https://achievethecore.org/index.php/page/3260/research-supporting-foundational-skills-in-reading
[2] https://achievethecore.org/page/2668/research-supporting-shift-3-building-knowl
[3] https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_The-Opportunity-Myth_Web.pdf
[4] https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2020/08/06/what-the-words-say
[5] Zumwalt, K., & Craig, E. (2005). *Teachers' characteristics: Research on the demographic profile.* In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education* (pp. 111–156). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
[6] https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=an-updated-look-at-diversity-in-childrens-books

Implementing the Early Reading Accelerators

The table below highlights some of the best practices that support implementation of the Early Reading Accelerators.

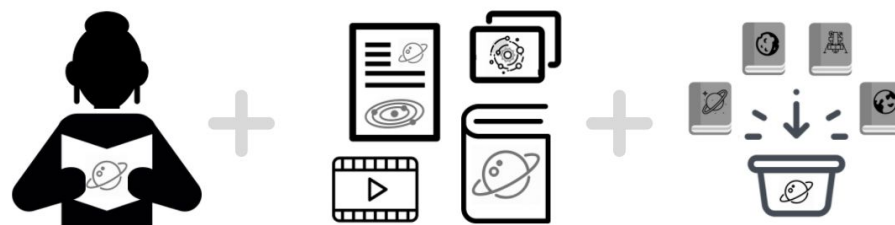| The Early Reading Accelerators in Action	
The Early Reading Accelerators are two critical pieces of early reading instruction for all students:	
Foundational Skills* *Students must learn how letters, sounds, words, and sentences work, and also learn to decode/encode.*	**Building Knowledge & Vocabulary** *Students build knowledge and vocabulary through content-rich, topically connected texts.*
Explicit, research-based instruction and practice following a clear scope & sequence of skills including: **Print Concepts** — **Phonological Awareness** — **Phonics & Word Recognition** — **Fluency** • **Print Concepts**: Ensure each child knows how print and books work. • **Phonological Awareness**: Recognize and identify the sounds of spoken language. • **Phonics & Word Recognition**: Explicitly teach the sound and spelling patterns that allow students to decode and encode words. • **Fluency**: Support students as they read accurately and with appropriate rate and expression, including practice with decodable texts based on taught skills. *Research-based practices for teaching reading and writing in English; these practices may need to be adjusted for a dual-language setting based on the needs of the language of instruction.*	Build knowledge of the world and words through topic-based study including: **Read Aloud** — **Text Sets** — **Book Baskets** • **Read-aloud** (content-rich, complex texts read and reread aloud) • **Text sets** (collections of texts and resources on a topic, representing a range of complexity levels) • **Book baskets** (independent/choice reading texts organized by topic, not levels) When engaging in text-based work: • Use discussion and writing to make meaning and showcase knowledge. • Take a text-first approach (not a standards- or skills-first approach) by using the big ideas and complexities of each text to drive your standards-aligned questions, tasks, and supports. • Attend to text-based academic and domain-specific vocabulary.

Key Considerations for Implementation of the Early Reading Accelerators

These three elements must work together to support effective and equitable implementation of the Early Reading Accelerators' content. Existing materials, structures, and practices may already encompass the outlined elements, but in most cases, will need work so that both instructional content and practice meet these goals.

Student Supports

Ensure all students have the support they need to engage in the work of the Early Reading Accelerators by choosing appropriate scaffolds based on data gathered through regular formative assessment practices.

Including:
- ❑ Supports for students, including grouping structures, are based on students' needs and are flexible. Groups do not remain static or serve to keep students in a cycle of below grade-level texts without a plan for acceleration.
- ❑ Flexible, needs-based, targeted whole-class and small-group foundational skills instruction and practice.
- ❑ Supports for all students to engage in lessons utilizing read-aloud with complex texts and related grade-level work.
- ❑ Supports for English learners, including leveraging students' home language and connections between and across to the language of instruction.

Culturally Relevant Instructional Practices

Use of culturally relevant instructional practices and content that are responsive to and respect the value of all students' backgrounds, languages, cultures, points of view, knowledge, and skills.

Including:
- ❑ Exploring our mindsets, expectations, attitudes, and biases about students - particularly students who are of color, live in families experiencing poverty, and/or are learning English - so we can ensure we hold positive views of student capabilities and high expectations for all students.
- ❑ Engaging in teaching that "emphasizes communal orientation [and is] focused on relationships, cognitive scaffolding, and critical social awareness."[7]
- ❑ Ensuring that students have opportunities to see themselves and their experiences positively affirmed in texts.
- ❑ Ensuring that texts and topics represent many diverse perspectives and identities - specifically centering texts and topics that reflect the languages, perspectives, and histories of students, which must include historically marginalized populations (both mirrors and windows).

Aligned Instructional Materials

Use of instructional materials that are aligned to the work of the Early Reading Accelerators (and college- and career-ready Shifts and grade-level standards).

Including:
- ❑ Instructional materials that support the acquisition of foundational skills through a clear scope and sequence of skills and research-based methods for instruction and practice.
- ❑ Instructional materials that support the building of knowledge and vocabulary through read-aloud of complex text *and* topic-based volume of reading for all students.

Note: Along with being aligned, instructional materials need to support all students to engage in grade-level work (see Student Supports) and use culturally relevant instructional practices and content (see Culturally Relevant Instructional Practices).

SAP is actively seeking feedback on this resource at info@studentsachieve.net.

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[7] Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, p. 156.