

## CHAPTER 1

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# The Interactive Strategies Approach

Children vary considerably in the ease with which they learn to read. Some learn with fairly little instructional guidance, whereas others find it to be a nearly impossible undertaking given the instruction typically offered in schools. A substantial body of research has accumulated in recent years that indicates that most early reading difficulties can be prevented through the implementation of appropriately targeted and intensified instructional interventions (e.g., Brown, Denton, Kelly, Outhred, & McNaught, 1999; Center, Wheldall, Freeman, Outhred, & McNaught, 1995; Coyne et al., 2013; Mathes et al., 2005; Gomez-Bellenge, Rogers, & Fullerton, 2003; O'Connor, 2000; O'Connor, Harty, & Fulmer, 2005; Scanlon, Vellutino, Small, Fanuele, & Sweeney, 2005; Scanlon, Gelzheiser, Vellutino, Schatschneider, & Sweeney, 2008; Torgesen et al., 2001; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003; Vellutino et al., 1996; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2008). Recently, the types, intensity, and responsiveness of interventions have drawn researchers' attention as efforts are made to optimize efforts to reduce the incidence of early reading difficulties. This more recent research suggests that, especially for the children who experience the greatest difficulties learning to read, responsive instruction is critical (Coyne et al., 2013; Simmons, 2015).

This book describes one approach to early literacy instruction and intervention—the interactive strategies approach (ISA; Vellutino & Scanlon, 2002)—which was developed and tested over the course of three major longitudinal studies that focused on reducing the number of children who experienced serious

reading difficulties in the early primary grades. These studies demonstrated that instruction based on the ISA has a positive impact on student achievement when implemented by classroom teachers and when implemented in small-group and one-to-one intervention settings beyond the classroom. Before describing those studies, we provide a brief introduction to the ISA.

### Research-Based Instruction

At a time when schools are called upon to implement research-based instructional practices, it is important to consider the distinction between “research-based” approaches and “research-tested” approaches. Many instructional approaches that are identified as research-based are simply that—based on research. The *research-based* label can be attached to a product or program if the developers have simply familiarized themselves with the research and then based their program on what was learned in that research. The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), which is sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education ([ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc)), reviews the scientific evidence on education programs, including beginning reading programs, to evaluate their effectiveness and serves as an unbiased source of information relative to research-tested educational products. Although there are many programs and approaches that have not been evaluated by the WWC (including the ISA), this website offers a valuable resource for schools as they contemplate investments in instructional materials and programs. In addition, for educators who want to do their own investigation of the research support for particular instructional programs or approaches, Duke and Martin (2011) provide useful guidance on interpreting research.

### Characteristics of the ISA

The ISA is an *approach* to early literacy instruction, not a program. It is not tied to particular instructional materials, nor does it provide highly scripted instructional interactions. Rather, the ISA offers a way to conceptualize early literacy development and to support children as they learn to read and write. We view teachers as professionals who use their knowledge of their students’ skills and abilities, in combination with knowledge of their curricula and the process of literacy development more generally, to plan and deliver effective literacy instruction. Although we do make some suggestions for instructional materials that are illustrative of the types of materials we encourage teachers to use, we also offer ideas for how teachers might evaluate and utilize the materials they have to more effectively meet the needs of their students—particularly those who find it challenging to learn to read. Our primary goal in this book is to help teachers more thoroughly understand early literacy development and to effectively respond to, plan for, and teach the children who find reading acquisition challenging.

The ISA places particular emphasis on meeting the needs of children who struggle at the early stages of learning to read through careful analysis of their literacy skills and provision of instruction that is responsive to their current capabilities. In order to provide such responsive instruction, teachers need to become highly knowledgeable about early literacy, how it develops, and how to respond to literacy learning difficulties. Therefore, the development of teacher knowledge related to early literacy development is a major focus of the ISA and thus a major focus of this book.

The name of the approach conveys the importance placed on helping children become strategic in their reading and writing endeavors. From our perspective, the goal of instruction should be to teach foundational skills and strategies that children will learn to use independently, flexibly, and interactively while reading and writing. Through this active and thoughtful engagement, children will grow as readers and writers. An important goal of instruction is to help children develop a *self-teaching mechanism* (Share, 1995, 2008) that will enable them to learn more about written language through engagement in the processes of reading and writing. To facilitate self-teaching, instruction should provide children with guided practice in reading and writing in contexts that are motivating and rewarding and using materials that are interesting, personally meaningful, and manageable (meaning not too difficult).

The logic behind the ISA stems from what we know about the development of certain reading-related skills and the young child's ability to comprehend written text—which is, after all, the only reason for reading. For children in the primary grades, the ability to comprehend written material is largely dependent upon their ability to accurately and quickly identify the words in the text. This is true partly because many of the materials that early primary-grade children read are not very challenging conceptually. Of course, when children do encounter reading materials that are conceptually challenging, fast and accurate identification of the majority of words in the text is still an important determinant of comprehension. However, the child's general world knowledge, language skills, engagement, and active thinking about the meaning of the text are also important determinants of comprehension.

In order to facilitate teachers' thinking about and planning for the needs of their literacy learners, much of this book is organized around a set of instructional goals that can be addressed in a variety of settings (e.g., whole class, small group, one to one) and instructional contexts (e.g., read-aloud, shared reading, writing). The purpose of organizing instruction around a goal structure is to encourage teachers to be mindful of what they are trying to accomplish with their students in each instructional context and thus to avoid engaging children in instructional activities that do not move them forward relative to their literacy learning goals.

In given primary classrooms, there is likely to be considerable diversity in the literacy skills and abilities of the children. Classroom teachers using the ISA are encouraged to be mindful of this diversity as they plan and deliver whole-class and small-group literacy instruction. To address the needs of the children who

struggle the most with literacy acquisition, classroom teachers are encouraged to provide small-group reading instruction on a daily basis, with lessons planned to specifically meet the needs of the children in the group. For children who qualify for intervention beyond the classroom, intervention teachers are similarly encouraged to provide instruction that is responsive to the children's current capabilities. Further, instruction in these settings should be supportive of the children's classroom language arts program as well, so that the children are better prepared to profit from classroom instruction (Simmons, 2015; Wonder-McDowell, Reutzel, & Smith, 2011).

### What's Different about the ISA?

In discussing the ISA, we are often asked to indicate how it differs from other approaches to early literacy instruction and intervention. If teachers experienced in using the ISA were asked this question, they would, most likely, talk about the approach to helping young children learn how to effectively puzzle through unfamiliar words encountered while reading. In the ISA, children are explicitly taught word-solving strategies and are coached in their use. The goal is for the children to become so effective and independent in word solving that they essentially have a self-teaching mechanism (Share, 1995) that enables them to learn to read the huge number of words that proficient readers ultimately know.

If we were asked the same question, we would agree with the teachers that the approach to teaching word-solving strategies is the most obvious difference between the ISA and other comprehensive approaches. However, we would add that the approach to teaching about the alphabetic code for the purpose of facilitating word learning is more thorough than many other approaches and more attentive to the need for children to learn to be flexible in their decoding attempts due to the irregular nature of English spellings. We would also argue that the attention given to enhancing children's vocabulary and word knowledge and to the impact of these knowledge sources on both oral reading and comprehension distinguishes the ISA from many other approaches to early literacy instruction. Finally, we would add that, unlike many other approaches to early literacy instruction, the foundational principles upon which the ISA is built are applicable across both classroom and intervention settings and, in fact, the ISA has been researched and found to be effective in whole-class, small-group, and one-to-one instructional settings.

### Studies of the ISA

In the first study of the ISA (Vellutino et al., 1996), an early version of the approach was developed and implemented in the context of one-to-one tutoring for struggling first-grade readers. Participating children were randomly assigned to receive ISA-based tutoring or the instruction and intervention normally offered in their

schools. Children who participated in the ISA tutoring were substantially less likely to experience long-term reading difficulties than were children in the comparison group.

The second study (Scanlon et al., 2005) was undertaken to address two concerns: that intensive one-to-one intervention was too costly for schools to sustain on a large scale and that, even when children were provided with intensive one-to-one intervention in first grade, some continued to experience significant reading difficulties. To address these concerns, we attempted to reduce the number of children who would qualify for intensive intervention in first grade by identifying children who were at risk for literacy learning difficulties at kindergarten entry and instituting intervention in a small-group context during the kindergarten year. The logic was that beginning intervention in kindergarten would prevent early limitations in literacy skills from growing and becoming debilitating. It was anticipated that this intervention would reduce the number of children who qualified for more intensive intervention in first grade and would reduce the severity of difficulties among children who continued to struggle despite kindergarten intervention. Random assignment to treatment conditions was, once again, utilized. The results indicated that participating in the ISA kindergarten intervention substantially reduced the number of children who qualified as poor readers in first grade. Further, for children who did qualify as poor readers in first grade, those who had participated in the ISA-based kindergarten intervention were less likely to demonstrate severe reading difficulties at the end of first grade than were children who had not participated in the ISA-based intervention in kindergarten. Thus the effects of kindergarten intervention were evident a full year after the children had left kindergarten, and this was true regardless of the type of intervention they received in first grade. It is also important to note that, in one combination of conditions, more than half of the children who qualified for intervention at the beginning of first grade (by scoring below the 15th percentile on a standardized measure of early literacy skills) made strong gains during first grade and scored above the 50th percentile at the end of the year. Thus, for children who did not respond well to an initial attempt to intervene, a second round of intervention that was more intensive and more specifically targeted to meeting their individual needs was effective in accelerating their reading growth.

The third major study of the ISA (Scanlon et al., 2008; Scanlon, Anderson, & Gelzheiser, 2010) involved implementing the ISA in one of three ways at both the kindergarten and first-grade levels. One approach involved providing small-group and one-to-one interventions for children, much like what was done in the Scanlon et al. (2005) study. The second approach involved providing ISA-based professional development for classroom teachers that entailed engaging the teachers in a summer workshop that paralleled the professional development provided for intervention teachers and thereafter providing in-school consultation and coaching on the implementation of the approach. The third type of implementation involved both direct interventions for children and professional development for their classroom

teachers. All three approaches were effective in reducing the incidence of reading difficulties by the end of both kindergarten and first grade. However, the anticipated benefit of the condition in which both intervention and professional development were provided did not materialize. School personnel, upon hearing of this surprising outcome, suggested that it may have been the result of classroom teachers feeling that they did not need to attend to the needs of the students in ISA-based intervention because their needs were being met in instructional contexts beyond the classroom. This, of course, is not the purpose of intervention programs, and we have no way to evaluate this possibility. However, it does give us reason to strongly caution schools that are implementing interventions on behalf of struggling readers to be certain that the interventions are an add-on to, rather than a replacement for, the instruction that would normally be available in the classroom.

### **The ISA and Response to Intervention**

As a result of the extensive research on the effectiveness of instructional enhancements in preventing long-term reading difficulties, including research on the ISA, in the past decade or so, there has been a major conceptual shift in thinking about how schools and teachers should respond to children who demonstrate reading difficulties. Whereas, in the past, children who were judged to be otherwise “normal” but who lagged seriously behind their peers in the development of reading and other literacy skills were often identified as learning disabled, it is now widely recognized that an individual’s ability to become literate is the result of a complex interaction between the underlying characteristics of the child and his or her prior experiences and the amount, type, and quality of the instruction that he or she receives. Although it is certainly acknowledged that some children need more instructional guidance to learn to read and write and that some, in fact, need very intensive and individualized support, we now recognize that nearly all children who are not hampered by severe intellectual, perceptual, or emotional limitations can develop reading and writing skill. As a result of this shift in thinking, a process for determining whether a child should be identified as learning disabled has been made available to schools through federal legislation passed in 2004. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) encourages schools to identify children who are at risk of experiencing learning difficulties early in their schooling and to begin interventions in an effort to ameliorate those difficulties. Further, information about the child’s response to instruction is used in determining whether he or she should ultimately be identified as learning disabled. This process is widely referred to as *response to intervention* (RTI; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). An important advantage of an RTI process is that it has the potential to prevent children from experiencing long-term learning difficulties because efforts to intervene are instituted before learning gaps have a chance to grow and become disabling. As a result, the process has the

potential to reduce the number of children who may be inaccurately identified as learning disabled due to inadequate instructional experiences.

At this time, the most widely recognized model of RTI utilizes a tiered approach to implementation. This approach (as described by Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006) entails (1) universal screening of all children, (2) identification of children who appear to be at risk of not meeting grade-level expectations and closely monitoring their progress, and (3) gradually increasing the amount and/or intensity of instructional support offered to children who do not show the gains needed to meet grade-level expectations. While there appear to be as many models of RTI implementation as there are research groups exploring the RTI process (Scanlon, 2011), most models involve three or four tiers of intervention, with Tier 1 encompassing instruction and intervention provided by the classroom teacher, Tier 2 involving more intensive and expert intervention provided beyond the classroom, and Tiers 3 and 4 providing even more intensive intervention and/or special education services, depending on the model.

Since passage of the IDEIA legislation in 2004 and the issuance of the accompanying regulations (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006), much has been written about the RTI process (Gersten et al., 2008; Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012). Most of the practitioner-oriented literature has focused on the broad frameworks for RTI approaches and on the demands of the record keeping needed to document interventions and progress. Remarkably little has been written about the instruction that is offered to children who are at risk of experiencing long-term difficulties. In fact, especially in the early years of RTI, instructional recommendations were often limited to advice to adopt research-based programs and to implement them with fidelity (e.g., Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Mellard & Johnson, 2008). However, research on instructional effectiveness suggests that it is what the teacher does rather than the program she or he uses that is the most important determinant of children's achievement (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Konstantopolous & Sun, 2012; Nye, Konstantopolous, & Hedges, 2004; Scanlon et al., 2008; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005). Consistent with this research, some of the most recent studies of the effectiveness of RTI indicate that child outcomes are improved when the interventions they receive are more responsive to what they know and are able to do (Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Coyne et al., 2013; Simmons, 2015) rather than being highly scripted and delivered with fidelity.

From early on, in work on the development of the ISA, as noted earlier, we focused on the development of teacher knowledge related to early literacy development and instruction so as to enable teachers to provide effective early literacy instruction across instructional contexts and curricula. We argue that the nature and quality of instruction are the most important determinants of a child's response to instruction and intervention. Further, we argue that, to be optimally effective, the instruction offered across instructional settings and contexts (i.e., the different tiers of intervention) should be responsive to the children's needs and be coherent and mutually reinforcing. This position is based on both empirical

and logical grounds. Empirically, it has been found that a greater degree of curricular congruence across instructional settings is associated with stronger reading outcomes in the primary grades (Borman, Wong, Hedges, & D'Agostino, 2001; Wonder-McDowell et al., 2011). On logical grounds, if our goal is to enable children to benefit from and succeed in the classroom language arts program, it seems that alignment of instruction across classroom and intervention settings would be the most prudent approach. Of course, if the classroom language arts program is weak and/or inappropriate for the children who qualify for intervention, modifications to the classroom program would be an important (first) step in enhancing the quality of instruction that is offered.

### **The ISA and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts**

Research on the ISA predates the development and adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA & CCSSO], 2010). However, the logic and emphases of the ISA are well aligned with some of the major shifts that are called for by the Standards. The three key shifts are:

1. Regular practice with *complex texts* and their academic language.
2. Reading, writing, and speaking *grounded in evidence from texts*, both literary and informational.
3. *Building knowledge* through content-rich nonfiction.  
([www.corestandards.org/other-resources/key-shifts-in-english-language-arts](http://www.corestandards.org/other-resources/key-shifts-in-english-language-arts))

Essentially, as these three key shifts suggest, the CCSS are built on the premise that knowledge development and reading development are closely linked (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2015). To help students meet the standards, we need to be addressing knowledge development from early on. And, although the ISA is intended for students in the primary grades, who probably are not ready to be reading the complex texts referenced in the standards on their own, these students are certainly able to engage with, learn from, and discuss information-rich texts that are read to them. Such engagement will help to prepare them for the expectations that they will face as they progress through the grades.

The CCSS also provide a good deal of guidance related to foundational skill development—the aspects of reading development that have traditionally been the major focus of primary-grade reading instruction. Here again, the ISA aligns well with the standards and provides teachers with effective practices to help children, even those who struggle with foundational skills, to attain those standards. Understanding how the writing system works and developing skill with reading printed words enables children to comprehend progressively more complex written texts.



## **The ISA and English Learners**

In the past few decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students in U.S. schools who are classified as English learners (ELs). The current estimate is that ELs constitute approximately 9% of the student population (Kena et al., 2014). While this increase in the number of children who need to rely on school to help them learn the English language has generated some research on methods for doing so, the research has not led to a widely accepted consensus on best practices. However, there is a developing consensus that suggests that, for children who speak very little English, schooling should initially focus on developing their skill with oral English and, whenever possible, developing written language skills in the language of the home (August, McCardle, & Shanahan, 2014). The theory behind this is that, under these circumstances, children will develop some foundational knowledge about how written language works and will be able to generalize at least some of this knowledge (depending on the similarities and differences between the languages) when they have sufficient skill with spoken English to allow them to begin to understand instruction about written English. In fact, in a review by Garcia (2000), it was found that, among children in grades K–2, reading in the home language was a better predictor of reading in English than was the student’s oral English skills.

In our research on the ISA, because of the locale in which the research was done and the populations served by the schools that agreed to participate, we have not had the opportunity to explicitly evaluate the effects of the ISA on ELs. However, our reading of the research on how to help ELs develop oral as well as written language skill in English suggests that the instructional practices that we advocate are aligned with what the research suggests, albeit sometimes with some modifications that are responsive to the children’s first language. We discuss these modifications in the appropriate chapters.

### **Reading Is a Complicated Process That Requires Comprehensive Instruction**

Reading is a complex process that requires the analysis, coordination, and interpretation of a variety of sources of information. In order to effectively meet the needs of literacy learners, especially those who struggle, instruction needs to take account of this complexity. Consider, for example, what is involved in reading and understanding the simple text below:

Matt was going to Sara’s party. Sara likes kites. Matt can bring her a kite.

To understand this text, the reader obviously needs to be able to (1) read the words, (2) retrieve the words’ meanings, (3) put the words together to form

meaningful ideas, and (4) assemble a larger model of what the text is about (Kintsch, 1998). Because difficulties with any of these processes can result in reading difficulties, all of these important processes need to be considered when designing instruction to help children learn to read.

Because teachers are proficient readers and perform many, if not all, of these processes effortlessly, they are sometimes surprised by, and insensitive to, the complexity of the processes. By becoming more attuned to these complexities, teachers can become better able to provide instruction and guidance to students who are learning to read. To help teachers gain these insights, we begin with an (incomplete) analysis of what a reader might do while reading the text about Sara's party.

### **Read the Words**

All of the words in this text are known to proficient readers. They can identify them automatically with little or no conscious thought. As a result, readers can devote most, if not all, of their thinking to making sense of the text. For beginning or struggling readers, however, some of the words will be somewhat or very unfamiliar, and they *will* have to devote thought to figuring out the words. Their success in doing so will depend on several things, including what they understand about how the alphabetic code works (i.e., how the printed letters represent the sounds in spoken words) and their ability to make use of other sources of information, such as the context in which the words occur. For example, if students attempted to "sound out" the word *was*, it would rhyme with *pass* rather than with *fuzz*! Using the context of the sentence in combination with the information provided by the letters in the word, beginning readers would be more likely to figure out the word.

### **Retrieve the Words' Meaning(s)**

The meanings of words are usually accessed quite automatically while reading *if* the words are in the reader's vocabulary. So, for example, readers who know what a kite is will activate that knowledge when reading the word *kites*. In fact, having knowledge of kites will allow readers to confirm that the printed word is, in fact, pronounced as *kites* rather than as *kit-es* or *kite-es*. For a word such as *can*, which has more than one common meaning (the container vs. the ability to do something), proficient readers generally become aware of only the meaning of the word that is signaled by the context.

### **Assemble Words to Form Idea Units**

As noted, the context in which a word occurs helps readers identify the word and, for words with more than one meaning, helps readers to identify the intended

meaning of the word. One of the ways that context operates is through readers' knowledge of spoken language and the implicit rules regarding which words can follow one another. For example, the verb meaning of *can* is selected in the sentence *Matt can bring her a kite*, partly because, within a sentence in English, a noun is more often followed by a verb than by another noun. Moreover, if in this sentence the proper noun *Matt* were to be followed by another proper noun (such as *Jack*), there would be a comma between the two proper nouns—another signal to which proficient readers attend unconsciously. Even when none of the words has multiple meanings, a hallmark of proficient reading (and listening) is that readers/listeners process the words in meaningful units or phrases. A meaningful unit might be a sentence, if it is short enough, or it might be only a part of a sentence—but the part would comprise a unit of meaning. For example, the sentence *Sara likes kites* might be processed as one meaningful unit because it is only three words long and presents a fairly simple idea. However, the longer sentence *Matt was going to Sara's party* might be processed as two meaningful units (e.g., *Matt was going [somewhere]* and *to Sara's party*). Exactly how a sentence would be processed would depend on a variety of factors, including how familiar readers/listeners are with the general topic, how easily they can access the meanings of the individual words, how easily they can identify the individual words, and so on.

### **Assemble a Larger Model of the Text**

By this point, readers of this chapter are likely to be growing weary of thinking about all of the things that proficient readers do while reading just three fairly simple sentences. However, so far the discussion has hardly touched upon the major purpose of reading and what is, perhaps, the most complicated part of the process: to understand, interpret, and/or react to what is stated in the text. In order to fulfill this purpose, readers must relate the idea units to one another to form a conceptual understanding of the text that spans the sentences and taps readers' knowledge in ways that facilitate comprehension (Kintsch, 1998; Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhill, 2005). That is, while reading a text, readers “read” more than what is actually on the page; how they understand the text depends on what they already know about the topic. So, for example, if they know something about birthday parties, readers may infer that Sara's party is a birthday party because that is the kind of party to which one might bring a toy for a present. Readers are also likely to make some inference about Sara's age, because it is less likely that one would bring a kite to a very young child or to an elderly adult. A discussion of the extent of thinking and inferring that might go on relative to this little bit of text could be quite extensive. Many readers, for example, construct a visual image of the two characters, including what they are wearing, what color hair they have, and so forth. The print on the page stimulates readers to think and visualize. For fully engaged and proficient readers, the thinking generally goes far beyond what is literally stated on the page.

The previous discussion is not intended to make teachers feel overwhelmed by what needs to be taught (although this would be a reasonable reaction). Rather, the purpose is to help teachers more fully appreciate the complexity of the processes involved in reading and to develop insights into aspects of the process that may need explicit instructional attention.

In what follows, we present information on how to support children's development as they are learning to read. Early in reading development, learning to read the words is a major hurdle, and so we focus a good deal of the discussion on this critical aspect. However, as the preceding analysis emphasizes, reading the words is only a part of the process. Early literacy instruction needs to attend to all aspects of the process. Teachers need to provide instruction that helps children develop knowledge of word meanings and the background knowledge that will enable them to do the kind of inferencing and reading between the lines that proficient readers do quite effortlessly. Teachers of beginning readers also need to ensure that the children understand that the purpose of print is to communicate, because only when readers understand that there is a message in the print will they engage in thinking beyond the initially challenging step of figuring out the words.

### **Children Who Struggle with Literacy Acquisition**

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We have known for many years that children who lag behind their peers in early reading development are at high risk of experiencing prolonged reading difficulties (Francis, Shaywitz, & Steubing, 1996; Juel, 1988; Phillips, Norris, Osmond, & Maynard, 2002; Prochnow, Tunmer, & Chapman, 2013; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2002) and, ultimately, of being identified as learning (or reading) disabled. Research comparing children who struggle with reading and those who learn to read with comparative ease has identified critical areas that differentiate the two groups. Much of that research was comprehensively summarized in the book *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) and in an article by Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, and Scanlon (2004). Similar findings emerged in the National Early Literacy Panel report (2008). Based on this body of research, there is a fairly strong consensus about the areas of difficulty that affect struggling readers and about the role of instruction in preventing reading difficulties. We briefly summarize this research below and periodically revisit it in relevant sections of this text.

#### **Phonological Processing Difficulties**

The research indicates that the most common area of difficulty among children who are identified as struggling readers at the early stages of learning to read is phonological processing (Snow et al., 1998). Because there is also strong evidence

that the phonological processing skills of struggling readers can be improved through instruction and practice (e.g., Ball & Blachman, 1991; Blachman, 1991; Scanlon et al., 2005; Tangel & Blachman, 1992, 1995; Vellutino et al., 1996), we devote a substantial portion of this book to ways to promote the development of phonological processing skills, including the ability to attend to and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words and to use the relationships between letters and their sounds to figure out the pronunciation of printed words. However, this focus should not be interpreted as suggesting that *all* early literacy instruction should emphasize phonological components. Indeed, many children appear to become proficient in the phonological domain with relatively little explicit guidance. Instruction that is too heavily focused on phonological skills may do little to further the development of these children.

### **Limitations in Language and General Knowledge**

Research has demonstrated that vocabulary knowledge influences comprehension (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014) and that, when measured at the preschool and/or primary level, it is one of the best predictors of reading comprehension in late elementary grades and throughout schooling (Scarborough, 2001; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). That is, in general, children who know the meanings of fewer words when they are young are likely to have greater difficulty comprehending the things they read when they are older (Cain & Oakhill, 2011; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Quinn, Wagner, Petscher, & Lopez, 2015). There is also evidence that classroom instruction can influence vocabulary knowledge. For example, Dickinson (2001) reports that, in preschool settings, the amount and quality of the language used by the children's teachers, the kinds of verbal interactions that occur in the classroom, and, more specifically, the types of interchanges that occur during read-alouds influence the development of oral language and vocabulary. In other words, early childhood teachers, in their instructional interactions with children, have the potential to positively influence language skills that are *critical* to future success in the comprehension of text. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) have provided similar findings with regard to book interactions between parents and their young children.

As discussed above in relation to the CCSS, reading comprehension is also influenced by the general knowledge possessed by readers. That is, what one already knows about a topic influences the acquisition of new information about that topic (Bransford & Johnson, 1972; Cain, Oakhill, Barnes, & Bryant, 2001; Neuman, 2006). Children who have had limited opportunities to develop the knowledge base that is expected in school are at a serious learning disadvantage as they progress through the elementary grades because they are expected to build on a knowledge base that is shaky or even nonexistent. ISA teachers are encouraged to use information-rich children's books—both books that are read to children and

books that the children read themselves—as a major resource for the development of language and general knowledge. We contend that early literacy instruction for all children, but particularly for children who demonstrate difficulties, needs to lead children to expect that the texts they listen to and read will make sense (Perfetti et al., 2005). Without this expectation, we are allowing children to become passive comprehenders—that is, children who do not take an active role in making sense of the texts they read. To this end, we urge teachers to model and foster children’s engagement with text meaning during interactive read-alouds from the very beginning.

### **Instructional Goals in the ISA**

Taking into account the multiple factors that influence an individual’s ability to comprehend written texts, the ISA is organized around a set of instructional goals. Teachers are encouraged to view instruction as a goal-oriented activity wherein they work to help children achieve identified goals, using a variety of instructional formats and materials. The goals range from the relatively simple and straightforward (e.g., developing letter-name knowledge) to those that are quite complex and involved (e.g., helping children become strategic and active readers). Subsequent chapters in this book are devoted to discussing each of the goals in detail. As we discuss each goal, we highlight the importance of being able to view literacy and literacy-related skills from the perspective of a young child who is a relative novice when it comes to understanding the intricacies of written language and how it relates to spoken language. Often, in our formal and informal observations of teachers working with young children and in our own work with young children who are struggling to learn about written language, we are struck by how difficult it is for highly literate people to take a step back and understand the complexity of reading and writing processes from the perspective of a child who is just beginning to experience print. This is a theme to which we return frequently in discussing the ISA goals, because one of our major purposes in this book is to help teachers develop greater expertise in identifying and responding to the difficulties experienced by struggling readers. Understanding the source of a child’s confusion is an important step in responding to that confusion.

In the goal chapters, we review the relevant research for each goal and discuss how the goal relates to reading and writing processes more generally. We also discuss and provide sample instructional activities that can be used to help children achieve the goal, and, where relevant, we discuss more and less challenging aspects of particular activities—often presenting a sequence of objectives within given goals. We discuss informal assessment tools for many of the goals and the need to use assessment to guide grouping decisions and instructional planning. Each of the goals is briefly described below.

## Motivation to Read and Write

The child will develop the belief that reading and writing are enjoyable and informative activities that are not beyond his or her capabilities.

In discussing this goal, we focus on a variety of factors that contribute to motivation, such as ensuring that children face an appropriate level of challenge in literacy tasks, expressing enthusiasm for reading and writing activities, actively engaging children in thinking about and responding to texts, making read-alouds an important and interactive part of the day, and construing reading and writing as privileges rather than as jobs (e.g., “You *get* to finish your book before recess” rather than “You *have* to finish your book before recess”).

## Alphabetics

The child will understand the relationships between printed and spoken language and will be able to use these relationships in reading and writing.

This overarching goal includes several individual goals related to the development of skill in using the alphabetic code. Each of the alphabetics goals is identified and described briefly below.

### Purposes, Concepts, and Conventions of Print

The child will understand that the purpose of print is to communicate. The child will also understand the basic print conventions, such as the left-to-right and top-to-bottom sequencing of print, where to begin reading, the concepts of letter and word, and so forth.

Children who have had little exposure to written language are apt to be unaware that print is actually a form of language and that it is possible to translate print into spoken language and spoken language into print. In addressing this goal, we discuss the need to be explicit about the relationship between spoken and written language and the multiple ways in which print is used to communicate.

Understanding these foundational concepts is critical if children are going to make progress with literacy development. For children who do not yet have these concepts established, instruction needs to be explicit and should introduce one new concept at a time. Previously taught concepts should be revisited until they are well understood.

### Phonological Awareness

The child will have a conceptual grasp of the fact that words are made up of somewhat separable sound segments. Further, the child will be able to say individual sounds in words spoken by the teacher and blend separate sounds to form whole words.

In addressing this goal, we attempt to attune teachers to the phonemes in spoken language. Many highly literate adults are confused about how to segment words in which there are more letters than sounds (e.g., *mouse*) or more sounds than letters (e.g., *box*). We discuss various approaches to developing phonemic awareness, with a particular emphasis on blending and segmenting. We also discuss the relative difficulty of analyzing words into different units (onsets and rimes vs. individual phonemes) and discuss the features of phonemes that make them more and less challenging for children to attend to and/or manipulate.

### Letter Naming

The child will be able to name, rapidly and accurately, all 26 letters of the alphabet, both upper- and lower-case versions.

In discussing this goal, we begin to address fluency with foundational skills as an important contributor to reading comprehension. We stress that automaticity (speed) with letter identification is important in order to free up cognitive resources for higher-level skills. To promote fluency with letter identification, we stress the importance of having children say the letter names frequently during the course of the various activities used to promote letter-name knowledge.

We also discuss young children's tendency to rely on the names of the letters as an aid to remembering their sounds. For example, the sound for the letter *b* is the first phoneme in its name (/b/).<sup>1</sup> Thus, for many letters, if children know the name of the letter, it will be easier for them to remember the sound for the letter.

### Letter-Sound Association

The child will be able to associate the most common sounds of individual letters with their printed representations.

For this goal we continue to focus on the relationship between letter names and letter sounds, how to take advantage of that relationship, and how to address the confusions that arise with letters for which the relationship does not hold. We discuss the utility of using key words to help children remember letter-sound correspondences, of using the same key words across instructional settings and grade levels, and of explicitly teaching children how to use the key words when reading and writing.

### The Alphabetic Principle and the Alphabetic Code—Early Development

The child will understand that the letters in printed words represent the sounds in spoken words and will understand how to use the beginning and ending letters in words in attempts to read and spell words.

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<sup>1</sup>To denote the sound of a letter, we follow the convention of enclosing the letter in slashes.



In the chapter devoted to this goal, we describe instruction designed to help children acquire a conceptual understanding of the alphabetic principle; that is, the fact that the letters in printed words represent the sounds in spoken words.

### Phonograms and Word Families

The child will develop the ability to use frequently occurring phonograms (e.g., *ay*, *ell*, *op*) to read and spell words.

Word families are built around phonograms. For example, from the *ay* phonogram the words *day*, *may*, *say*, *way*, *play*, *stay*, *tray*, and many others can be formed. The goal is to help children learn common phonograms and how to use them to effectively puzzle through printed words that contain those phonograms and to support conventional spelling of those words as well.

### The Alphabetic Principle and the Alphabetic Code—Later Development

The child will understand how to use all of the letters in printed words as an assist in determining the pronunciation of the word. Similarly, the child will learn to represent all of the sounds in a spoken word with an acceptable letter when writing.

In discussing this goal, we address ways to increase skill with decoding and encoding by teaching children about consonant digraphs, consonant blends, short and long vowels, and vowel digraphs. We stress the benefits of guiding children to be strategic as they apply their developing knowledge of the alphabetic code in authentic reading and writing situations.

### Morphological Units and Multisyllabic Words

The child will understand that words are often composed of more than one unit of meaning (e.g., root words plus prefixes and/or suffixes) and will learn how to break longer words into meaningful units and/or syllables as an assist to reading and spelling them.

It is important for children to attend to all of the letters in written words when attempting to identify unfamiliar words, in order to store thorough representations of those words in memory. However, ultimately, children need to learn to process larger orthographic units rather than puzzling through words in a letter-by-letter fashion, as this will help them to develop fluency. Explicit instruction in how to make use of these larger units can help learners to make progress toward proficient reading and writing.

In discussing this goal, we focus on instruction around frequently occurring inflectional suffixes and derivational prefixes and suffixes. Learning how to interpret and use these affixes can simplify aspects of word solving and help to expand children's knowledge of word meanings. In this same chapter, we also discuss ways

to help children learn about clues to syllable boundaries and how to apply this knowledge when puzzling through longer unfamiliar words.

## Word Learning

■ The child will learn to effortlessly identify a large number of written words.

This major goal is addressed via two subgoals, each of which focuses on a different vehicle for word learning. Although the term *sight vocabulary* is sometimes used to refer to high-frequency words or irregular words, we use the term to refer to all words that can be identified effortlessly “at sight.”

### Strategic Word Learning

■ The child will develop flexibility and independence in applying code-based and meaning-based strategies to identify and learn unfamiliar words encountered in text.

Strategic word learning is a central goal of the ISA, as having the ability to puzzle through and accurately identify unfamiliar words provides children with a powerful mechanism by which to expand their sight vocabulary and thereby their ability to read. We emphasize the need for children to use both code-based and meaning-based strategies in interactive and confirmatory ways.

### High-Frequency Words

■ The child will be able to read the most frequently occurring words accurately and quickly.

Although many of the words that become part of a child’s sight vocabulary are learned during the course of strategic reading, some words warrant special instructional attention. These are words that occur frequently in print and are somewhat more difficult to learn due to their irregular spellings and/or abstract nature. Teachers are encouraged to explicitly teach and provide practice with such words. We discuss game-like drill activities that motivate children to practice the high-frequency words and texts that provide additional practice.

## Meaning Construction

■ The child will have the language skills and knowledge base needed to enable him or her to derive and construct the meaning of the texts that are read.

Comprehension is the goal of reading. Because children who are identified as struggling readers in the early primary grades are generally labeled thusly on the basis of their difficulties with the alphabetic coding and word-learning aspects of reading, the importance of attending to meaning construction is sometimes overlooked, but it should not be. Instruction specifically focused on enhancing comprehension

is addressed through discussion of three goals: fluency, vocabulary and language development, and comprehension and knowledge.

### Fluency

The child will be able to read grade-appropriate text accurately with appropriate speed and with phrasing and intonation that conveys the intended meaning of the sentence.

Fluency is included under the overarching goal of meaning construction because, in order to construct meaning while reading, readers need to devote the majority of their cognitive resources to meaning construction rather than to word solving. Fluent reading is also a signal that the reader is comprehending—at least at the sentence level—because, without comprehension, it would be difficult for the reader to apply the appropriate intonation. Being able to read fluently does not, of course, guarantee comprehension of the larger text, but it increases the likelihood that the reader will comprehend.

### Vocabulary and Oral Language Development

The child will learn the meanings of new words encountered in instructional interactions and will be able to use the words conversationally. Further, the child's ability to understand and use complex grammatical structures will improve.

Reading is a language skill. Children need to develop the vocabulary and other language skills upon which reading comprehension depends. Teachers are encouraged to be alert to vocabulary and syntactic challenges throughout their instructional interactions. The opportunities for the development of vocabulary and syntactic knowledge provided by interactive read-alouds are a major focus relative to this goal. However, teachers are also alerted to the fact that children frequently encounter unfamiliar words in their own reading and that word identification difficulties are sometimes caused by not knowing the meaning of printed words. When this happens, the reader cannot decide (or confirm) whether a word has been accurately decoded.

### Comprehension and General Knowledge

The child will develop the foundational knowledge and comprehension skills and strategies that will enhance his or her ability to construct the meaning of, and learn from, texts heard or read.

For children in the early primary grades, the development of active engagement in meaning construction is discussed in the context of read-alouds and supported reading. We encourage teachers to model comprehension strategies and to engage children in conversations that require the use of those strategies (e.g., “I think he’s going to get a puppy for his birthday. What do you think he’s going to get? Why?”).

To help build the critical knowledge base upon which comprehension depends, we encourage teachers to read informational books to the children as often as possible. As children begin to read texts on their own, teachers are urged to engage children in discussions of what they are reading so as to avoid allowing children to develop the belief that reading is about saying the words right (and quickly) and not about meaning construction.

### **General Principles for Preventing Reading Difficulties**

One of the main purposes of early intervention efforts is to prevent early differences in literacy skills from growing and becoming disabling. Although the specific content of what is taught is an important factor in the success of interventions, there are equally important general principles of instruction that can help maximize the impact of the instruction offered.

#### **Teach Children to Be Effective and Independent Problem Solvers**

Vygotsky (1978) was a developmental theorist who believed that much of what children learn as they grow and develop is the result of extended interactions with adults or more expert “others.” Vygotsky argued that the skills that children acquire reflect the internalization of problem solving that they have initially done in collaboration with adults, who have provided *careful verbal guidance to direct and guide children’s thinking*. The theory is that children internalize the verbal guidance initially provided by their teachers in such a way that it becomes a form of inner speech that influences their thinking when they encounter similar problems.

If we assume that adults’ speech (and, through it, adults’ thinking) is, on some level, internalized by children, then it becomes important to carefully consider our instructional language and to try to take the perspective of the children relative to our language. Do we use terms or expressions that may not hold the same meaning for the children? It is all too easy to inadvertently use terminology that carries no meaning or a different meaning for children who struggle with literacy acquisition. For example, for some beginning kindergartners, a *letter* is something that comes in the mail, not a little squiggle that is associated with a sound. It is remarkably easy to wrongly assume that children know or understand things; as a result, an instructional episode may be quite confusing to them. Virtually every teacher has had this experience.

It is also important to give children the opportunity to see how to use the problem-solving processes we teach. Because problem solving is a thinking process, the only way the children can “see” the process is if we think out loud so that they can vicariously experience the process. The instructional jargon for this approach to instruction is called *think-aloud*, and it is an important component of

instruction designed to develop strategic thinking. When we think out loud for the children, we are essentially guiding the development of their thinking.

Vygotsky (1978) also argued that the most effective instruction focuses on skills and abilities that are somewhat challenging for a child to handle independently but that are easy enough for the child to handle when assistance is offered at key points. The disparity between what children are able to do with and without assistance is referred to as the *zone of proximal development*. From a Vygotskian perspective, the role of a teacher is that of a skilled collaborator. In this role, teachers must be:

- Adept at evaluating children's current level of competence and deciding what they are ready to learn next.
- Facile at modifying the demands of the task so that it suits the needs of each child.

Based on Vygotsky's theory, Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) developed the concept of *scaffolding* as an analogy for the role that skilled collaborators play in supporting a child's learning. Scaffolding involves the provision of various types of support that allow children to successfully accomplish a task that is too challenging for them to accomplish on their own. The scaffolding technique also involves the gradual *reduction* of support as a student demonstrates the ability to regulate his or her own thinking and problem solving. In order to do the types of assessment, modification, and scaffolding suggested here, it is necessary for teachers to have a firm grasp of the developmental progression of the skills they are helping students develop.

### **Ensure That Students Are Actively Engaged in Learning**

The more reading and writing children do, and the more they practice the underlying skills that are foundational for reading and writing, the more quickly they become proficient. This is true when children actually engage in the cognitive processes required to read and write. Unfortunately, children sometimes find ways of avoiding the thinking parts of instructional activities. For example, in a choral reading situation, when the entire class or group is engaged in reading the same text, some of the children may not be looking at the words and thinking about them. Rather, they may be simply gazing in the right direction and saying the words just slightly after their friends say them. These children may look engaged, but they are not. They need the opportunity to read text to the teacher or to a friend in order to fully engage in the necessary thinking processes.

Similar types of disengagement can arise when a teacher calls on one child *before* asking a question. For example, if the teacher is engaging the children in a shared writing activity and wants to know what letter to use at the beginning of the word *dog*, she might call on one child, saying, "Jake, what letter do I need at

the beginning of the word *dog*?” As soon as the teacher says Jake’s name, some of the children in the group may disengage, knowing that they will not be expected to answer. If, on the other hand, the teacher asks the question without immediately calling on an individual, more of the children are likely to engage in the thinking. Better still, if the children all have dry-erase boards on which to write, they could all engage in the task. The teacher might say, “Write down the letter you think I need at the beginning of the word *dog*.” This allows every student to respond; as a result, they are *all* likely to benefit from the instructional interaction. We strongly encourage teachers to incorporate opportunities for every student to respond during the course of instruction.

**KEEP IN MIND**

In developing instructional activities, an important question to ask is “What are the children likely to be thinking about/focusing on during the activity?” If the conclusion is that they are unlikely to be focused on the skill or concept (the goal) that the activity was designed to support, the activity should be redesigned.

Another consideration relative to the relationship between engagement and learning is the fact that children sometimes become overly involved in the hands-on (e.g., cutting, gluing, coloring) aspects of instructional activities and are not really thinking about the skill or concept that the task was designed to support. It is important to make clear to the children why they are doing specific things and what they can do during the hands-on aspects of the activity to support their learning. For example, if children are learning the sound of the letter *m* and gluing macaroni to a cut-out of an *M*, while they are doing this, they might be encouraged to think of other words that have the /mmm/ sound that is heard at the beginning of the word *macaroni* and to share their ideas with other children at the table. If children are not provided with guidance in how to think about the instructional activity, at least some are apt to devote most of their thinking to the gluing and fine-motor activity or, in this instance, to thinking about the food they are manipulating. Similarly, if children are practicing their spelling words by writing them several times, it would be helpful for them to say each letter as they write it and then say the word each time it is completed. It would also help if they tried to write the word from memory each time and then checked it against a model. Otherwise, the spelling practice may become nothing more than an unengaged copying task.

The general point with regard to engagement is that teachers need to guide how children think about instructional activities so that the activities actually move the children forward in literacy acquisition.

**Set High Expectations for All Children**

At various points in the history of education, people have believed that some children were just destined to have great difficulty learning to read and/or write and

that there was little to be done to help them overcome their difficulties. Research has demonstrated that students tend to live up to the expectations we have for them (Smith, Jussim, & Eccles, 1999). Thus a belief that a child is unlikely to make progress has the clear potential to slow the progress made by that child. Conversely, the expectation that a child will succeed academically increases the likelihood that she or he will do so. In fact, research conducted in “beat-the-odds” schools, in which children succeed at much higher levels than might be expected given their socioeconomic circumstances, indicates that a common characteristic of such schools was that school staff held high expectations for all of the children (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000).

### What Does “Ready to Learn” Mean?

For many years there was a commonly held belief that children needed to be developmentally ready to learn to read. Exactly what people meant by “being ready” varied, but it was certainly tied to the child’s age and, in some cases, physical development. For example, some thought that children should not be taught to read until they had lost their first tooth!

What we mean when we use the phrase *ready to learn* is that the child has the prerequisite conceptual understandings and skills to allow him or her to benefit from instruction in a certain area. Every child is ready to learn something. Our job as educators is to figure out *what* the child is ready to learn, not *whether* the child is ready to learn.

The research on the success of early literacy interventions makes it easier to hold high expectations for children who initially demonstrate limited literacy skills. Every child is expected to do well in reading and writing development, and, if the child is not progressing, we are more inclined to examine the instruction than to examine the child to determine what has gone wrong. In other words, instruction is now considered to be a much more powerful influence on a child’s reading and writing development than it once was. Children do learn what we teach them, as long as we teach them what they are ready to learn. The challenge, of course, is that the children in any given classroom generally are not all ready to learn the same things. Nevertheless, they are all expected to attain the same grade-level standards. This is why different amounts and intensities of instruction and intervention are so important to promoting literacy success. In a classroom setting, working with small, flexible, skills-based groups for a substantial portion of the language arts block offers the greatest opportunity for the teacher to meet this challenge. Similarly focused small-group and one-to-one instructional contexts enable intervention teachers to respond to the needs of the children who are more challenging to teach.

### **Integrate Support Services with the Classroom Program**

For children who are receiving intervention services beyond the classroom, it is important that the instruction in all settings works toward mutually supportive ends (Allington & Johnston, 1989; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, & Mekelsen, 2004; Wonder-McDowell et al., 2011). To the greatest extent possible, intervention teachers should support and reinforce the content of the classroom program. For example, at the kindergarten level, if instruction about the alphabet is sequenced in a particular way, it makes sense to sequence alphabet instruction in intervention settings to parallel the classroom sequence. Similarly, if key words are used in the classroom to support the learning of letter sounds, supplementary instruction should use the same key words. Likewise, it is helpful to determine which high-frequency words children are expected to know by the end of a given grade level and to make these words a priority for instruction. Additionally, some of the reading materials used in intervention settings should come from the classroom program. Such a purposeful selection gives the children the opportunity to interact with these materials in a way that they may not experience in the larger classroom context. Many more opportunities to build congruence could be suggested. By increasing the congruence between classroom and supplementary instruction, we hope to increase the impact of both the classroom instruction and the intervention support. The children who struggle in the classroom program will be better prepared for subsequent instruction in the classroom if they have reviewed some of the material in another context.

### **Plan for Success**

In all instructional interactions, teachers should make every effort to structure the activities so that the children experience success and the rewarding feelings that go along with it. Teachers should help students recognize that their successes are due to their efforts. Conversely, teachers should avoid making negative and discouraging comments. Although a teacher may sometimes feel frustrated that he or she has yet to find a way to help a particular child accomplish a particular objective, communicating this frustration will only serve to make the child feel that the situation may be hopeless. If the child is not progressing in a certain area, it is important to try to determine the source of the problem. Perhaps the level of difficulty needs to be reduced. Perhaps the child is misconstruing the task. Perhaps the teacher is using terminology for certain concepts that is different from the terminology to which the child is accustomed. It is particularly important for teachers who are providing supplementary instruction to be aware of the terminology used in the children's classrooms. For example, whereas adults and most older children readily recognize the equivalence of terms such as *upper-case* and *capital*, young children often do not. Attending to potential stumbling blocks such as task difficulty or confusion regarding terminology before they occur will help to ensure



that children experience success and continually move forward in their literacy development.

### Track Student Progress

Because knowing what children are already able to do is so essential to knowing what they are ready to learn next, it is important for teachers to keep records of their students' skills and strategies. To this end, for most aspects of literacy development that are discussed in this book, we provide skill and strategy checklists to facilitate record keeping and, most importantly, to support teachers as they reflect on their students' current abilities and plan instruction.

Because teachers usually use such record-keeping devices in the context of working with small groups of children, each checklist provides space for teachers to record information on up to five children. We refer to these checklists as "snapshots" because they allow teachers to get a quick look at the skills, strategies, and attitudes/beliefs of children in a particular group to inform their instructional planning. Each snapshot is discussed in some detail in the relevant chapters of the book.

*Note.* The companion website includes downloadable copies of the group snapshots as well as versions that can be used to track individual students' development across time.

Many of the snapshots call for the teacher to rate children's skills and strategies using a 3-point scale: *beginning*, *developing*, and *proficient*. Such ratings are appropriate for what Paris (2005) refers to as *constrained skills*—skills that are learned over a relatively short time span and that are mastered by most students. These ratings are also appropriate for evaluating strategy usage. As illustrated below, to make the record keeping as efficient as possible, teachers are encouraged to use slashes to denote their judgment of individual children's standing relative to particular skills and strategies. However, some teachers prefer to use the letter codes.

- ☒ *B—Beginning* indicates that instruction has addressed the objective but that the child has only a preliminary understanding or capability with regard to that particular objective.
- ☒ *D—Developing* indicates that the child has some understanding of the objective but does not reliably demonstrate that understanding or capability or is not yet automatic (fluent) with the skill.
- ☒ *P—Proficient* indicates that the child reliably and automatically demonstrates the understanding or capability.

In other instances, the snapshots call for teachers to indicate whether individual children's capabilities in given areas are *well developed*, *appropriately developed*, or *need development*. Essentially, this rating reflects the teacher's judgment as to whether or not this is an aspect of literacy development that requires greater instructional emphasis.

## Organization of the Book

The remainder of this book is largely organized around the instructional goals for young children detailed earlier and the instructional methods for helping children to achieve those goals. However, first we devote Chapter 2 to describing what a typical week and a typical day of language arts instruction might look like in a kindergarten or first-grade classroom, our purpose being to provide a framework for considering how the goals would be addressed in the context of language arts instruction. Next, Chapter 3 discusses academic motivation as it relates to literacy learning and particularly for those who struggle with literacy acquisition. Thereafter, we devote Part II to the development of skill with the alphabetic code, which covers everything from developing an understanding of the purposes and conventions of print to learning to process larger orthographic units such as morphemes and syllables in multisyllabic words. Next, Part III is devoted to word learning, with separate chapters discussing the different ways in which sight vocabulary is developed—through strategic word solving while reading and via explicit instruction and practice with high-frequency words. In Part IV, on meaning construction, we discuss the language, background knowledge, engagement, and fluency factors that influence readers' ability to comprehend the things they read, and we suggest ways of supporting the development of these important contributors to comprehension. Finally, Part V covers implementing intensified ISA-based instruction in an RTI context and summarizes the discussions across the text.

Throughout the goals chapters, we provide commentary on the relationship between each goal and the standards from the CCSS to which it pertains. In addition, we provide instructional considerations pertinent to addressing the needs of EL children.