

First Grade

Standards and Instruction

First-grade students extend their knowledge of language arts in significant and exciting ways as they learn skills that enable them to read and write more independently. Instruction should be focused on helping students improve the skills they had begun to develop in kindergarten. An instructional priority must be that the students learn to read and exit the grade with the ability to decode and recognize increasingly complex words accurately and automatically. Moreover, they should be able to write and spell those words and use them to communicate ideas and experiences. Concurrently, students must have broad and rich experiences to expand their knowledge of vocabulary and concepts and extend their exposure and understanding of literary forms. As they write and speak, they should be able to apply the conventions and structures of sentences.

Of foremost importance is the availability of quality instructional materials that

will allow students to achieve and apply different standards in the first grade. Specifically, students will need decodable texts with which to practice the decoding skills they are learning. In addition, they will need a broad array of high-quality literature and informational texts for the teacher to read to them as they develop listening comprehension skills prerequisite for reading comprehension. The separate forms of text are necessary because neither by itself is suitable or adequate to develop the full range of skills expected of first graders. Each type of text has a distinct and significant role in beginning reading instruction.

The strands to be emphasized at the first-grade level are listed on the following page under the appropriate domains.

Each of the strands is addressed separately in the following section, with the exception of the written and oral English-language conventions strand, which is integrated into appropriate sections.

Reading

- 1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development
 - 2.0 Reading Comprehension
 - 3.0 Literary Response and Analysis
-

Writing

- 1.0 Writing Strategies
 - 2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)
-

Written and Oral English-Language Conventions

- 1.0 Written and Oral English-Language Conventions
-

Listening and Speaking

- 1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies
 - 2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)
-

Reading Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development

Concepts About Print

First-grade students refine their understanding of the relationship between print and language and extend that understanding to more specific applications. Specifically, they should be able not only to discriminate letters from words and words from sentences but also to match a spoken word (e.g., *cat*) with a printed word. This awareness of words and their relation to speech is reinforced by instruction and practice in phonemic awareness.

First graders further their understanding of books and stories by learning the standard conventions of print, including titles and authors. Instruction in concepts

about print is focused on teaching students to (1) match oral words with printed words; (2) learn the conventions of stories, books, and other forms of literature (titles, authors); and (3) discriminate letters, words, and sentences. A recommended instructional method is to teach a particular convention of print (e.g., title) as any other basic concept, using a wide range of examples. Once students learn the basic concept, it should be incorporated into a wide array of text forms and be reviewed systematically.

Phonemic Awareness

The first-grade curriculum and instruction in phonemic awareness prepare learners by making explicit the relationship between the words they hear and the phonemic structure of the language. Students must possess phonemic awareness if they are to understand the relationship between speech and print and therefore develop proficiency in reading and writing increasingly complex words and word types. Instruction in language at the phoneme level and student proficiency in that area are the hallmarks of the curriculum standards for the first grade. Through systematic instructional sequences, students should become not only phonemically aware but also phonemically proficient in identifying and producing a range of phonemic awareness skills. (*Note:* For a more complete discussion of phonemic awareness and its relation to early reading and spelling success, see the kindergarten section in this chapter.)

First-grade students should be provided with systematic and extensive instruction and practice in:

- Learning to analyze words at the phoneme level (i.e., working with individual sounds within words)
- Working with phonemes in all positions in words (initial, final, medial)

- Progressing from identifying or distinguishing the positions of sounds in words to producing the sound and adding, deleting, and changing selected sounds
- Allocating a significant amount of time to blending, segmenting, and manipulating tasks
- Working with increasingly longer words (three to four phonemes)
- Expanding beyond consonant-vowel-consonant words (e.g., *sun*) to more complex phonemic structures (consonant blends)
- Incorporating letters into phonemic awareness activities
- Aligning the words used in phonemic awareness activities with those used in reading

Instruction in phonemic awareness can span two years, kindergarten and first grade. But in this aspect of teaching as in others, the teacher must be guided by the students' developing competencies. Some students require little training in phonemic awareness; others might require quite a bit. Although early phonemic awareness is oral, the teacher must be careful not to delay in providing learning opportunities with print. Learning phonics and learning to decode and write words all help students continue to develop phonemic awareness. In addition, students who have developed or are successfully developing phonemic awareness should not have to spend an unnecessary amount of time being instructed in such awareness. Adequate, ongoing assessment of student progress is essential.

Decoding and Word Recognition

Students who enter the first grade should possess two critical skills: (1) fundamental understanding of the phonemic structure of words; and (2) association of letters and sounds. Some

students combine the two skills intuitively through alphabetic insight; that is, the process of hearing sounds in words and using the sequence of letters in words and their associated sounds to read words. A priority of the first-grade curriculum must be to ensure that all students develop alphabetic insight and extend their ability to decode words independently and read words automatically. Automaticity comes from reading many decodable texts in which most words are composed of taught letter-sound correspondences and some words are taught directly as sight words. Decodable text should be used as an intervening step between explicit skill acquisition and the student's ability to read quality trade books. It should contain the phonic elements with which students are familiar. However, the text should be unfamiliar to the student so that they are required to apply word-analysis skills and not reconstruct text they have memorized.

A review of the content standards indicates that in the first grade students progress from being able to generate the sounds for all consonants and vowels to reading compound words, words with inflectional endings, and common word families. Decoding plays an essential role in this evolution from a time when students enter with limited knowledge of how to recognize words to a time when they leave fully able to recognize unfamiliar words. Beginning decoding (or more technically, phonological recoding) is the ability to (1) read from left to right simple, new regular words; (2) generate sounds from all the letters; and (3) blend those sounds into a recognizable word. Explicit instruction and attention to specific letters in words and repeated opportunities to practice words successfully result in automaticity—the ability to recognize a word effortlessly and rapidly. Decoding is essential to reading unfamiliar

words and reading words independently and is a critical benchmark in a student's reading development.

Because the English language is alphabetic, decoding is an essential and primary means of recognizing words. English has too many words for the user to rely on memorization as a primary strategy for identifying words (Bay Area Reading Task Force 1997). In the first grade the skills and strategies learned in decoding and word recognition are extended in the standards for writing conventions. For example, as students learn to read compound words and contractions, economy in instruction can be gained by having the students write the words and use them in speaking. Similarly, as students learn to read three- and four-letter short-vowel words and sight words, they should be given instruction and opportunities to practice spelling those words.

Decoding instruction in the first grade should:

- Progress systematically from simple word types (e.g., consonant-vowel-consonant) and word lengths (e.g., number of phonemes) and word complexity (e.g., phonemes in the word, position of blends, stop sounds) to more complex words.
- Model instruction at each of the fundamental stages (e.g., letter-sound correspondences, blending, reading whole words).
- Sequence words strategically to incorporate known letters or letter-sound combinations.
- Provide initial practice in controlled connected text in which students can apply their newly learned skills successfully.
- Include repeated opportunities to read words in contexts in which students can apply their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.

- Use decodable text based on specific phonics lessons in the early part of the first grade as an intervening step between explicit skill acquisition and the students' ability to read quality trade books. Decodable text should contain the phonics elements and sight words that students have been taught. However, the text should be unfamiliar to students so that they are required to apply word-analysis skills and not simply reconstruct text they have memorized.
- Teach necessary sight words to make more interesting stories accessible.

First-grade instruction in word analysis should teach students high-frequency irregular words systematically. Words with high utility should be selected and used judiciously in early reading. Teachers should point out irregularities while focusing student attention on all letters in the word and should provide repeated practice. The number of irregular words introduced should be controlled so that the students will not be overwhelmed. High-frequency words (e.g., *was, saw, them, they, there*), often confused by students, should be strategically separated for initial instruction as well.

Instruction in word families and word patterns (i.e., reading orthographic units of text, such as *at, sat, fat, rat*) should begin after students have learned the letter-sound correspondences in the unit (Ehri and McCormick 1998). Teaching students to process larger, highly represented patterns will increase fluency in word recognition. However, the instruction should be carefully coordinated and should build on knowledge gained from instruction in letter-sound correspondence.

The benchmark for facile word readers in the first grade is their ability to read aloud fluently in a manner that resembles natural speech. Although important in its

own right, fluency has significant implications for comprehension. A primary reason for its importance is that *if students are not fluent, automatic decoders, they will spend so much mental energy decoding words that they will have too little energy left for comprehension* (Stanovich 1994). Comprehension clearly involves more than fluent word recognition but is dependent on fluent word recognition. On average, first graders increase their reading fluency approximately 2.10 correct words per minute per week (Fuchs et al. 1993). After an estimated 30 weeks of instruction, students should leave the first grade reading approximately 60 words per minute correctly. Practice in fluency is most appropriate when students are accurate word readers. One technique that has been used to increase fluency is repeated readings of the same text to develop familiarity and automaticity (Samuels 1979).

Vocabulary and Concept Development

The curriculum and instruction offered in the first grade extend the understanding of concepts and vocabulary in English. Instruction should focus on two types of vocabulary development, basic categorization of grade-appropriate concepts (e.g., animals, foods) and the words students hear and read in stories and informational text that are instrumental to comprehension. Vocabulary development occurs through both direct instruction in specific concepts and words and through exposure to a broad and diverse range of words in stories and informational text that have been read.

In addition to learning specific vocabulary, first-grade students also learn to use context and surrounding text to understand the meaning of unknown words. They are provided instruction and opportunities that prepare them to use new and

descriptive vocabulary in their speaking and writing.

Reading Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension can be developed through listening and reading. For kindergarten students and all other students whose decoding and word-recognition skills do not yet allow them access to story-level passages, systematic opportunities must be provided to listen to stories and answer comprehension questions orally. The oral readings should have more complex vocabulary, syntactic structures, and story lines than are found in the text used for decoding and word recognition.

Key comprehension strategies for first graders include:

- Identifying text that uses sequence or other logical order
- Following one-step written instructions
- Responding to or posing *who, what, when, where, and how* questions
- Recognizing the commonalities that occur across stories and narrative text
- Using context to resolve ambiguities about the meaning of words and sentences
- Confirming predictions by identifying supporting text
- Relating prior knowledge to textual information
- Retelling the central ideas of simple expository or narrative passages

Instruction in comprehension is designed with the same precision as instruction in word recognition. For comprehension to occur, the words in the text, along with their meanings, must first be accessible to the learner. Initial reading comprehension is practiced with texts students can read at their level. When

appropriate, the complexity of comprehension instruction may be simplified by allowing students to learn and practice the strategy from information presented in speech or in pictures. If the forms of presentation are not appropriate, initial instruction in comprehension can begin with manageable textual units (e.g., sentences, short paragraphs before longer passages, and complete stories).

Additional instruction in comprehension may include:

- Modeling multiple examples and providing extensive guided practice in comprehension strategies
- Helping students recognize the features of text that facilitate comprehension
- Brainstorming central ideas from the text (e.g., What do we know about what frogs eat? What do we know about where they live? What do we know about their appearance? What else would we like to know about frogs?)

The text for initial instruction in comprehension should (1) begin with linguistic units appropriate for the learner; (2) use familiar vocabulary; (3) be based on a topic with which the learner is familiar; and (4) use simple syntactical structures. Instruction in comprehension should also require students to determine which strategy to use and why and provide extensive opportunities for students to read and apply the strategies throughout the year. For example, instruction designed to teach children to answer *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how* questions (Reading Comprehension Standard 2.2) would consist of determining which type of question to ask first. *Who* and *what* questions are typically easier to answer than *when* and *where* questions. For *when* and *where* questions, instruction in how to identify the when and where in text may

be necessary. These examples would be presented orally because the wording may be too difficult for first graders to decode:

After the baseball game tells when.

On Saturday tells when.

On the table tells where.

In San Francisco tells where.

When students can correctly identify and discriminate between when and where, they learn to answer questions from sentences. *Example:*

Text: “Nick went home after the baseball game.”

Question: “When did Nick go home?”
(After the baseball game)

A simple instructional design would teach each type of question separately. After one type is clearly understood and applied (e.g., *who*), a second type (e.g., *what*) would be introduced. After both types are understood, *who* and *what* questions can be combined in an instructional session.

At the very beginning of instruction, first-grade students should be given a linguistic structure they can comprehend. Sentences are, therefore, a plausible starting point because they provide a manageable unit of language that conveys information. Once students can answer questions at the sentence level, the teacher can proceed to multiple sentences and eventually to paragraphs. Students who are more advanced can be prompted to ask and answer the questions.

Reading Literary Response and Analysis

First-grade students should extend their schema or structure of stories to the organizational structure that narrative text has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In

addition, they should learn the sequence or logical order of informational text. They use those structures to comprehend text as well as retell stories. The elements of plot are added to the previously taught setting, characters, and important events. For a description of instructional design for elements of story grammar, see the kindergarten section in this chapter.

The importance of understanding the structures of text is reflected in the number of related standards. For Literary Response and Analysis Standard 3.1, for example, students read about and learn the elements of stories. They also learn that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. These structures are directly connected to Writing Application Standard 2.1, for which students write brief narratives describing an experience. Further related is Speaking Application Standard 2.2, the objective of which is for students to retell stories, using basic story grammar elements.

Content standards in mathematics, history–social science, and science can be addressed simultaneously as students read (or have read to them) stories or expository text that develop concepts and vocabulary in those academic areas. Economic, effective curricular programs and instruction will draw upon those relationships to expedite and reinforce language arts learning across the curriculum.

Strategies recommended in teaching organizational sequences of text (informational or narrative) are:

- Ensuring that students have a conceptual understanding of beginning, middle, and end
- Introducing text where the components of text are explicit (beginning, middle, and end being obvious)

- Beginning with short passages to reduce the memory load for learners
- Focusing on only one component at a time (e.g., beginning)
- Introducing an additional component when students can reliably identify those previously taught
- Guiding students through sample text in which teachers think out loud as they identify the components
- Having students discuss the elements orally and make comparisons with other stories
- Using the beginning, middle, and end as a structure for recalling and retelling the story or information

Writing Writing Strategies and Writing Applications

First-grade writing combines the important skills of idea formation and documentation, penmanship, and spelling. Spelling assumes increased importance as students are responsible for communicating their ideas through recognized conventions. At this stage spelling instruction takes three forms. Students should be taught explicitly how to use their knowledge of the phonemic structure of words and letter-sound correspondences to spell *the words they do not know*. As students begin to read words, they should be taught to spell *the words they can read*. In addition, students need to learn to spell *high-frequency words* correctly. The ability to use phonetic spelling, although temporary, indicates that children “have achieved an essential milestone toward mastery of decoding in reading” (Moats 1995).

Moats reports that although some students easily learn to spell correctly, many others do not. Guidelines for

instruction in spelling for students who do not easily learn to spell correctly include:

1. Systematic, teacher-directed instruction and practice with controlled amounts of new information
2. Regulation of the amount of information presented at one time (Introduce smaller sets of words as opposed to entire lists at one time.)
3. Plentiful opportunities to practice newly introduced spellings
4. Presentation of only one spelling rule or generalization at a time
5. Provision of immediate corrective feedback
6. Organized, sequential instruction that builds on phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondences and regular one-syllable patterns.

Students in the first grade are introduced to writing as a means of communicating. They begin to understand that writing is a process and learn to apply the process appropriately to write brief narratives and brief descriptions of objects, persons, places, or events. As students learn to apply process writing to narrative and descriptive structures, they also learn the different types of sentences along with the conventions for recording their ideas (e.g., capitalization, punctuation). They learn to apply writing conventions, with particular emphasis being placed on the fundamentals of grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

General guidelines for writing instruction include:

1. Selecting and emphasizing those sentence types most useful for communicating ideas
2. Focusing on one form of punctuation until learners achieve mastery

and then introducing a second form

3. Sequencing student writing activities so that they first see good models, edit other writing, and then generate their own sentences or text

As students learn the various stages of writing as a process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing), they should have a structure for incorporating varying combinations of the stages into their writing that is based on the purpose of a specific piece of writing. Using a story grammar structure or a simple structure for descriptive text helps students apply the stages of writing.

Listening and Speaking

Listening and Speaking Strategies and Speaking Applications

First-grade students are increasingly responsible for comprehending information presented orally, communicating their ideas through speaking and writing, recalling important information from narratives and informational text, and answering questions. Their responses should incorporate greater diversity into the words they use and greater mastery of grammatical structures. To respond to or produce complete, coherent sentences that use descriptive words or correct singular and plural nouns, students need models of those structures along with many opportunities to produce their own sentences.

Instructional considerations to improve sentence production include:

1. Providing explicit models
2. Eliciting student responses that progress from identification to production

3. Carefully selecting, sequencing, and scheduling instructional targets that allow learners to master one form (e.g., *my*) before progressing to the next (e.g., *his/her* or *your/yours*)
4. Providing frequent opportunities to repeat sentences
5. Strategically integrating instruction requiring students to discern the correct usage (e.g., *his/her*, *your/yours*)

In addition to learning sentence-level standards for listening and speaking, students should learn to comprehend and reconstruct sequences of information, including multiple-step directions, poems, songs, and stories. Incremental instruction in which students are taught to recall increasingly longer units should build on the sentence-level guidelines previously outlined.

Content and Instructional Connections

The following activities integrate standards across domains, strands, and academic disciplines. Teachers may wish to:

1. Use known letters, phonemic awareness, letter-sound associations, and encoding skills to read, write, and spell words.

2. Reinforce the connections between phonemic awareness, translating a printed word into its letter-sound correspondences, reading the whole word, and spelling. Use words that students can read in spelling and writing activities.
3. Introduce words from stories in various instructional activities. Provide frequent opportunities for students to hear and practice new vocabulary.
4. Provide ample opportunities for students to hear stories read aloud and then discuss those stories.
5. Provide opportunities for students to retell stories based on their knowledge of story elements. Model how to retell familiar stories, emphasizing coherent English-language conventions.
6. Use the story grammar structure to comprehend, retell, and compose stories.
7. Have students read (and read to them) stories and informational text that address the first-grade content standards in mathematics, science, and history–social science.

Please see Appendix B for examples of standards that span domains and strands.

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Curricular and Instructional Profile

Reading Standard 1.10

DOMAIN	STRAND	SUBSTRAND	STANDARD
Reading	1.0	Word analysis, fluency, and systematic vocabulary development	Decoding and word recognition
			1.10 Generate the sounds from all the letters and letter patterns, including consonant blends and long- and short-vowel patterns (i.e., phonograms), and blend those sounds into recognizable words.

Prerequisite standard. **Kindergarten Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development Standard 1.14:** Match all consonant and short-vowel sounds to appropriate letters.

Prerequisite or corequisite standards. **First-Grade Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development Standards 1.8, 1.9.**

Standard 1.8: Blend two to four phonemes into recognizable words.

Standard 1.9: Segment single-syllable words into their components.

Corequisite standard. **First-Grade Written and Oral English-Language Conventions Standard 1.8:** Spell three- and four-letter short-vowel words and grade-level-appropriate sight words correctly.

Curricular and Instructional Decisions

Instructional Objectives

1. The standard addressing the year-end goal of being able to blend all letters and letter patterns into words involves a minimum of three skills:
 - a. Knowledge of some letter-sound correspondences
 - b. Ability orally to blend and segment words of three to four phonemes

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Instructional Objectives (Continued)

c. Ability to blend letter-sound correspondences taken from written words

Assessment, instruction, and practice should address each of the components.

2. Before teaching students to recognize the sounds associated with each letter and blend those sounds into a word, determine whether students have the prerequisite skills (see 1a and 1b). Students do not have to know all the letter sounds before initiating blending and word reading. However, to satisfy the prerequisite for this standard, they must know some letter sounds and be able to blend and segment words auditorily.
3. Blending is a focused and distributed instructional priority. That is, during initial instruction there is an intense focus on this strategy. Teachers provide extensive instruction (delivered in short increments) and practice in learning to blend easy word types. Instruction and practice in blending must be reintroduced when new word types are introduced. Although this instructional period may be brief, students must understand that blending is used not only with short words (e.g., *sun*) but with longer words as well (e.g., *splash*).

Instructional Design

Successful word reading depends largely on:

1. Systematic selection and sequencing of letters in the words to maximize students' ability to blend
2. Progression of word difficulty based on length and configuration of consonants and vowels within the word
3. Explicit instruction and modeling in how to blend letter sounds into words
4. Sufficient practice in transitioning from reading each letter sound at a time to reading the whole word
5. Explicit instruction in how to "sound out words in your head"

Systematic Selection and Sequencing of Letters in Words

Letter sounds in words have properties that can enhance or impede blending and word reading. For initial instruction in blending, the letters in words should be:

- Continuous sounds because they can be prolonged or stretched (e.g., /m/, /s/)
- Letters students know
- Used in a large number of words for high utility
- Lowercase unless the uppercase and lowercase letters have highly similar shapes (e.g., Ss; Vv)

Note: Visually and auditorily similar (e.g., /b/ and /d/) letter sounds should not be in the same initial blending activities.

Progression of Word Difficulty Based on Length and Configuration of Consonants and Vowels Within the Word

Words used in blending instruction and practice should:

- Progress from the short vowel-consonant and consonant-vowel-consonant (two- or three-letter words in which letters represent their most common sounds) to longer words (four- or five-phoneme words in which letters represent their most common sounds).
- Reserve consonant blends (e.g., /st/, /tr/, /pl/) until the students are proficient in working with consonant-vowel-consonant configurations.
- Begin with continuous sounds in early exercises to facilitate blending. Stop sounds (sounds that cannot be prolonged in the breath stream, such as /t/, /p/, and /ck/) may be used in the final positions of words.
- Represent vocabulary and concepts with which students are familiar.

Progression from Oral Blending to Oral Whole-Word Reading to “Sounding It Out in Your Head”

- Orally blending the letter-sound associations of a word is a first step in word reading. In this process students produce each sound orally and sustain that sound as they progress to the next. This process focuses student attention on the individual letters in the word and on their importance.
- Once proficient in blending the individual sounds orally, students are taught to put those sounds together into a whole word. This important step must be modeled and practiced.
- The final step in this sequence involves students sounding out the letter-sound correspondences “in their head” or silently producing the whole word.

This systematic progression is important because it makes public the necessary steps involved in reading a whole word.

Orally Blending Individual Letter Sounds

1. Model the process of blending the sounds in the word (“I’ll read this word, blending the sounds *mmmmmmmaaaaaannnnnn*”). Do not stop between the sounds. Make certain that the sounds are not distorted as you stretch them out. You may want to use language that helps make the process more vivid (stretching out the sounds, keeping the sounds going).
2. Use your finger or hand to track under each letter as you say each individual sound.

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Curricular and
Instructional
Profile

**Instructional
Delivery
(Continued)**

3. Hold each sound long enough for the students to hear it individually. Stop sounds cannot be prolonged without distortion. When introducing words that begin with stop sounds (such as *t*, *k*, and *p*), teach the students that those sounds should be pronounced quickly and should not be stretched out.
4. Use an explicit teaching sequence in which you model examples first and then have the students blend the words with you. Finally, the students should blend the words on their own.
5. Include a sufficient number of examples to assess students' proficiency. This instructional segment should be relatively brief (five to ten minutes) in the daily language arts lesson.

Producing the Whole Word

1. Introduce the whole-word step in which students say the word at a regular pace once they can blend the sounds in the word.
2. Provide sufficient time for students to put the sounds together. The sequence involves orally blending the individual letter sounds in the word and then saying the whole word.

Internalizing the Blending Process

1. In the final step of the blending process, students sound out the word to themselves and then produce the whole word.
2. Two important dimensions of this phase are:
 - a. Showing students how to internalize
 - b. Providing sufficient time for all students to blend the word in their head and say the word
3. On average, students should be able to blend sounds and retrieve a word at a rate of a maximum of one second per letter sound in the word. If they require more time, they may not have mastered the prerequisite skills.
Because blending is now an overt process, teachers must use strategies to show students the transition steps. Teachers might wish to model how to trace a finger under each sound, subvocalizing the sounds of the word.

General Design

1. Provide frequent, short periods of instruction and practice on blending. Examples should include newly introduced letter sounds and newly introduced word types—consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant (e.g., *rest*).
2. Relate blending instruction to spelling when students master blending and reading words at a regular rate. Teaching students the relationship between reading and spelling strengthens alphabetic understanding and the connections between reading and writing.

Assessment

Entry-Level Assessment

Monitoring Student Progress

1. *Entry-Level Assessment for Instructional Planning*
 - a. Assess student knowledge of letter sounds to identify letter sounds to use in initial blending and word-reading instruction. Students should be fluent in some letter-sound correspondences prior to beginning word-reading instruction.
 - b. Assess students' phonemic blending ability (e.g., the ability to blend three to four phonemes into a word).
 - c. Determine whether students can read words in lists of word types or in passages containing high percentages of words that are phonetically regular. Identify word types (length and consonant-vowel configuration) that students can read and begin instruction at that point.
 - d. Use nonsense words or pseudo words as measures to assess blending ability. Nonsense words are phonetically regular but have no commonly recognized meaning (e.g., *rin*, *sep*, *tist*). With nonsense words you can determine students' knowledge of individual letter-sound correspondences and blending ability.
 - e. Most first graders will have a limited repertoire of words they can read depending on the kindergarten instruction they have received. Many students may have a core of sight words they can identify and may look like readers. However, they may not have adequate decoding skills.
2. *Monitoring Student Progress Toward the Instructional Objective*
 - a. This assessment phase is designed to determine students' progress and mastery of letter-sound knowledge. The options available are:
 - Maintaining a set of taught letter sounds and word types. To evaluate progress, assess student performance at least once every two weeks on words containing familiar letter sounds. Record performance and document particular letter sounds or blending patterns with which they have difficulty (e.g., stopping between sounds; not being able to read whole words).
 - Monitoring progress toward the long-term goal with a list of words selected randomly from the first-grade curriculum. Although all word types will have been introduced during the early months of the academic year, this measure provides a common measure by which to evaluate students' change in word-reading ability over time.
 - b. Once students are reading individual words at a rate of one word per three seconds or less, introduce connected text as an assessment tool.

First Grade

Assessment (Continued)

Post-test Assessment

Universal Access

Reading Difficulties or Disabilities

Advanced Learners

3. *Post-test Assessment Toward the Standard*
 - a. Blending is a temporary and distributed instructional priority. Students may be able to blend some word types but not others. Therefore, there may be ongoing post-tests depending on the word type being studied.
 - b. Post-tests should be distributed throughout the year. To assess overall growth, administer a test that measures fluency through the use of a nonsense-word measure to determine entry-level skills. Or have the students read a passage that represents the range of word types and blending requirements for the year.

1. *Students with Reading Difficulties or Disabilities*
 - a. These students need a firm understanding of prerequisite skills before beginning blending. If they cannot blend sounds auditorily or know only a few letter-sound correspondences, provide appropriate instruction before introducing blending.
 - b. Some first graders will continue to stop between the sounds in a word. Provide extra models of not stopping between the sounds and provide sufficient waiting time for students to process the sounds into the whole word.
 - c. Assess whether the rate of introduction of new letter sounds into blending or new word types is manageable for students with special needs. If the pace is too rapid, provide additional instruction.
 - d. If students have difficulty in retaining the blending strategy, schedule a booster session sometime during the day for one to two minutes.
2. *Students Who Are Advanced Learners*
 - a. Use entry-level assessment to determine the need for instruction in blending. Keep in mind that some students may have memorized a large repertoire of words but still lack blending strategies. Use the nonsense words measure to assess their ability.
 - b. Determine the word type(s) for which students need instruction. They may learn the blending strategy and immediately generalize to more complex word types, making further or extensive instruction in blending unnecessary.
 - c. If isolated word types are unfamiliar to students, design an instructional schedule to address the missing skills. If the students are proficient in decoding phonetically regular words, proceed to introductory passage-reading standards.

- d. Provide explicit instruction in targeted skill areas, keeping in mind that the students may acquire the blending strategy very quickly. Accelerate movement through instructional objectives.
- e. If the students can demonstrate mastery of the grade-level standards, consider grouping the students within or across grade levels to work on the second-grade standards.

Because many advanced learners enter the first grade reading well above grade level, the teacher should determine their overall reading ability in addition to their performance in specific skill areas. On the basis of a comprehensive assessment, give students challenging instructional materials and monitor their progress carefully to ensure they are learning at a rate commensurate with their abilities.

Note: Unnecessary drill and practice in areas of high performance can be very discouraging for advanced learners because they are being asked to learn something they already know.

3. *Students Who Are English Learners*

The following suggestions assume that students will begin language arts instruction in English and that literacy instruction is augmented by concurrent formal linguistic instruction in English (English-language development). If instruction is provided in part in the primary language and that language is alphabetic, the instruction in the primary language should be designed according to the same standards and principles established for language arts instruction in this framework. It is suggested, therefore, that the teacher:

- a. Reassess the students' knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and phonological awareness of the sounds included in the lesson before teaching English learners to blend sounds. Additional phonological and letter-sound instruction should be provided as needed. Teachers should be aware of phonological differences between English and the students' primary languages and provide additional exposure to and practice with the difficult sounds.
- b. Provide additional modeling and practice for those English learners who need further assistance. Appropriate modeling can be provided by the teacher or by native English-speaking peers. Be sure to provide sufficient waiting time to process and produce sounds.
- c. Assess whether the rate of introduction of new letter sounds into blending or of new word types is manageable. If not manageable for some students, determine a way to provide additional systematic, guided instruction so that they will be able to catch up with their classmates and accomplish the lesson objective.

First Grade**Universal
Access
(Continued)**

- d. Ensure that students have had previous instruction or experiences (or both) with the words included in the instruction and that they understand their meaning.
- e. Assess what knowledge is assumed before each unit of instruction. That is, determine what knowledge the typical English speaker already brings to the classroom and provide preteaching of key concepts.
- f. Have English learners who have acquired literacy skills in their first language draw on those skills in English. Teachers can build on the knowledge of reading skills that students have acquired in their first languages when teaching English letter-sound correspondences.
- g. Provide English learners with explicit models of the letter-sound correspondences that students are expected to know and correct errors as would be done for other learners. Correction of errors should always be conducted in a way that encourages students to keep trying and helps them see the progress they are making.

**Instructional
Materials**

1. Texts should contain explicit instruction in the blending process as well as in the transition from blending to the reading of whole words.
2. The letter-sound correspondences included in the words and the word types should be carefully selected.
3. Measures for assessing entry level and progress throughout instruction should be included in curricular materials.
4. Related skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, spelling) should be correlated, and connections should be made in instructional materials and instruction.
5. Decodable texts should be provided as an intervening step between explicit skill acquisition and the student's ability to read quality trade books. Decodable texts should contain the phonics elements with which students are familiar. However, the text should be unfamiliar to the student because the student should apply word-analysis skills, not reconstruct text already memorized.

First Grade

English–Language Arts Content Standards

Reading

1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development

Students understand the basic features of reading. They select letter patterns and know how to translate them into spoken language by using phonics, syllabication, and word parts. They apply this knowledge to achieve fluent oral and silent reading.

Concepts About Print

- 1.1 Match oral words to printed words.
- 1.2 Identify the title and author of a reading selection.
- 1.3 Identify letters, words, and sentences.

Phonemic Awareness

- 1.4 Distinguish initial, medial, and final sounds in single-syllable words.
- 1.5 Distinguish long- and short-vowel sounds in orally stated single-syllable words (e.g., *bit/bite*).
- 1.6 Create and state a series of rhyming words, including consonant blends.
- 1.7 Add, delete, or change target sounds to change words (e.g., change *cow* to *how*; *pan* to *an*).
- 1.8 Blend two to four phonemes into recognizable words (e.g., /c/a/t/ = cat; /f/ /a/t/ = flat).
- 1.9 Segment single syllable words into their components (e.g., /c/a/t/ = cat; /s/p/ /a/t/ = splat; /r/i/ch/ = rich).

Decoding and Word Recognition

- 1.10 Generate the sounds from all the letters and letter patterns, including consonant blends and long- and short-vowel patterns (i.e., phonograms), and blend those sounds into recognizable words.
- 1.11 Read common, irregular sight words (e.g., *the, have, said, come, give, of*).
- 1.12 Use knowledge of vowel digraphs and *r*-controlled letter-sound associations to read words.
- 1.13 Read compound words and contractions.
- 1.14 Read inflectional forms (e.g., *-s, -ed, -ing*) and root words (e.g., *look, looked, looking*).
- 1.15 Read common word families (e.g., *-ite, -ate*).
- 1.16 Read aloud with fluency in a manner that sounds like natural speech.

Vocabulary and Concept Development

- 1.17 Classify grade-appropriate categories of words (e.g., concrete collections of animals, foods, toys).

2.0 Reading Comprehension

Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They draw upon a variety of comprehension strategies as needed (e.g., generating and responding to essential questions, making predictions, comparing information from several sources). The selections in *Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight*

First Grade

illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students. In addition to their regular school reading, by grade four, students read one-half million words annually, including a good representation of grade-level-appropriate narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information). In grade one, students begin to make progress toward this goal.

Structural Features of Informational Materials

- 2.1 Identify text that uses sequence or other logical order.

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 2.2 Respond to *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how* questions.
- 2.3 Follow one-step written instructions.
- 2.4 Use context to resolve ambiguities about word and sentence meanings.
- 2.5 Confirm predictions about what will happen next in a text by identifying key words (i.e., signpost words).
- 2.6 Relate prior knowledge to textual information.
- 2.7 Retell the central ideas of simple expository or narrative passages.

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Students read and respond to a wide variety of significant works of children’s literature. They distinguish between the structural features of the text and the literary terms or elements (e.g., theme, plot, setting, characters). The selections in *Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students.

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 3.1 Identify and describe the elements of plot, setting, and character(s) in a story, as well as the story’s beginning, middle, and ending.

- 3.2 Describe the roles of authors and illustrators and their contributions to print materials.
- 3.3 Recollect, talk, and write about books read during the school year.

Writing

1.0 Writing Strategies

Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing successive versions).

Organization and Focus

- 1.1 Select a focus when writing.
- 1.2 Use descriptive words when writing.

Penmanship

- 1.3 Print legibly and space letters, words, and sentences appropriately.

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students write compositions that describe and explain familiar objects, events, and experiences. Student writing demonstrates a command of standard American English and the drafting, research, and organizational strategies outlined in Writing Standard 1.0.

Using the writing strategies of grade one outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Write brief narratives (e.g., fictional, autobiographical) describing an experience.
- 2.2 Write brief expository descriptions of a real object, person, place, or event, using sensory details.

Written and Oral English Language Conventions

The standards for written and oral English language conventions have been placed between those for writing and for listening and speaking because these conventions are essential to both sets of skills.

1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions

Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

Sentence Structure

- 1.1 Write and speak in complete, coherent sentences.

Grammar

- 1.2 Identify and correctly use singular and plural nouns.
- 1.3 Identify and correctly use contractions (e.g., *isn't*, *aren't*, *can't*, *won't*) and singular possessive pronouns (e.g., *my/mine*, *his/her*, *hers*, *your/s*) in writing and speaking.

Punctuation

- 1.4 Distinguish between declarative, exclamatory, and interrogative sentences.
- 1.5 Use a period, exclamation point, or question mark at the end of sentences.
- 1.6 Use knowledge of the basic rules of punctuation and capitalization when writing.

Capitalization

- 1.7 Capitalize the first word of a sentence, names of people, and the pronoun *I*.

Spelling

- 1.8 Spell three- and four-letter short-vowel words and grade-level-appropriate sight words correctly.

Listening and Speaking

1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies

Students listen critically and respond appropriately to oral communication. They speak in a manner that guides the listener to understand important ideas by using proper phrasing, pitch, and modulation.

Comprehension

- 1.1 Listen attentively.
- 1.2 Ask questions for clarification and understanding.
- 1.3 Give, restate, and follow simple two-step directions.

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

- 1.4 Stay on the topic when speaking.
- 1.5 Use descriptive words when speaking about people, places, things, and events.

2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students deliver brief recitations and oral presentations about familiar experiences or interests that are organized around a coherent thesis statement. Student speaking demonstrates a command of standard American English and the organizational and delivery strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0.

Using the speaking strategies of grade one outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Recite poems, rhymes, songs, and stories.
- 2.2 Retell stories using basic story grammar and relating the sequence of story events by answering *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* questions.
- 2.3 Relate an important life event or personal experience in a simple sequence.
- 2.4 Provide descriptions with careful attention to sensory detail.