

Commercial Reading Programs Containing All or Most of the Critical Elements for Effective Programs: Feldman's "Biased Bibliography"

Note: This is not intended as an exhaustive listing, rather it is a sampling/review of reading programs with a particular eye towards what works with diverse and struggling readers, students with identified "learning disabilities", and others with reading difficulties. The "screen" I have used is - does it align with the NICHD, National Reading Panel and other validated research summaries? And does it have some school level empirical data to support its efficacy? Many of these programs focus on key decoding skills and need good literature/exposition added to create the balance needed for a comprehensive literacy program. KF

Phonemic Awareness/PreReading Phonology

There are many excellent programs in this domain, and more coming online all the time, among the best in my opinion (research based and/or often research validated - i.e. the first 3 are all validated programs) include:

- 1.) **Phonemic Awareness in Young Children** - Marilyn Adams et al. Paul Brooks pub. www.pbrookes.com (800) 638-3775. A comprehensive Kinder curriculum that would do well in almost any classroom, very complimentary of adopted core programs in California (e.g. Open Court, Houghton-Mifflin). Major weakness is in instructional design - requires strong teacher knowledge to insure the excellent activities are implemented in a robust manner.
- 2.) **Road to the Code** - Blackman et al. -Paul Brooks pub. www.pbrookes.com (800) 638-3775. Another comprehensive Kinder curriculum that would do well in almost any classroom, very complimentary of adopted core programs in California (e.g. Open Court, Houghton-Mifflin). I really like Road to the Code because the core activity "say it - move it" is so powerful, and adaptable for young children. This is a superb little curriculum.
- 3.) **Ladders to Literacy** - Paul Brooks pub. www.pbrookes.com (800) 638-3775. Another comprehensive Kinder curriculum that would do well in almost any classroom, very complimentary of adopted core programs in California (e.g. Open Court, Houghton-Mifflin). Ladders also has preK program for 4 yr. olds and a web-based support group via the U of Washington - see <http://www.wri-edu.org/ladders/> Ladders is not as complete at the higher levels of phonemic awareness as Road or PA in YC... but it is a strong program.
- 4.) **Soundabet** - www.soundabet.com 707.824-1871 - this is a teacher designed program by noted Sonoma County Kindergarten teacher, Dan Gurney. Soundabet introduces the 40 most common sounds (phonemes) of English and their corresponding spellings. Using music and interactive writing/games Soundabet is a delightful and effective way to develop phonemic awareness and basic alphabetic principle in young learners.
- 5.) **Lindamood/Bell - Lips** - <http://www.lindamoodbell.com/> 1-800-233-1819 The Lindamood Phonemic Sequencing™ (LiPS™) Program (formerly called the *ADD Program, Auditory Discrimination in Depth*) successfully stimulates phonemic awareness. Individuals become aware of the mouth actions which produce speech sounds. This awareness becomes the means of verifying sounds within words and enables individuals to become self-correcting in reading and spelling, and speech. LIPS is a venerable program, long track record, it works... My only concern is that it is "overkill" for many students, and is best utilized (in my opinion) when more efficient/less time intensive methods have not proven effective.

Beginning Reading

- 1.) **Open Court** - SRA/McGraw Hill - (800) 662-5958, in No. Ca call rep. Gary Parsons, (707) 575 - 7390. In my view, it is the best general education anthology or basal reading program currently available in terms of research support and alignment with NICHD evidence. Open Court is the only major anthology that directly teaches sound blending and provides decodable books that are truly decodable. Currently the Reading Lions project, supported by the Packard Foundation, is working with over 20 districts in Ca. using Open Court in K-3 with excellent results, call Project Director Alice Furry for details, (916) 228-2219. One caution, Open Court may move too fast for students with serious reading difficulties. It would be an excellent choice for general education, but support programs may need to supplement (e.g. pre-teaching the afternoon before the lesson).

2.) Scholastic Phonic Readers & Phonic Chapter Books- John Shefelbine - (800) 724-6527, in No Ca. call Debbie Swan (530) 222-1721.

Not a complete Language Arts curriculum, but a wonderful supplement for anyone needing a good beginning decoding program. The program uses attractive decodable books, blackline masters teachers can copy so kids can take home books, detailed lesson plans moving systematically through the critical skills and patterns, directly teaches sound blending... a very solid program for beginning readers. (now in CD ROM format too!)

3.) Phonics for Reading - Anita Archer et al. - Curriculum Associates - (800) 225 - 0248; Ca. rep. is Cynthia Gasporovich (408) 293-2221.

Not a complete Language Arts curriculum, but an excellent supplement if you are looking for a sound decoding program. It is the least expensive solid program I know of... it systematically goes from pre-primer level to about third grade. Scripted lessons provide teachers with all they need to directly build these critical skills and strategies. Comes in three levels (roughly grades 1-3), much like a "Junior REWARDS" program. It is excellent!

4.) Reading Mastery - SRA, - Zig Engleman et al, - (800) 662-5958, in No. Ca call rep. Gary Parsons, (707) 575 - 7390.

An upgraded and improved version of the old DISTAR program, RM is a direct instruction program. Research results for RM have consistently demonstrated its effectiveness, especially for at risk and special needs students. Many special education teachers have experienced excellent results with RM. The program contains scripted lessons, student response books, and lots of controlled decodable texts. No Ca. consultant, Sue Coleman (707) 538 - 4877, provides expert training and classroom coaching with RM.

5.) Project READ - <http://www.projectread.com/> (800) 450-0343

Project READ was developed for struggling readers in the primary grades and has been expanded for use in general education as well. The program is very clearly sequenced and involves teacher directed lessons and practice in decodable texts. I have not seen any published studies evaluating Project READ, but the informal testimonials have been very positive and from teachers I trust and respect... worth a look.

6.) Words Their Way - Bear et al. Merrill/Prentice Hall (1999 2nd edition)

Not a reading program but a book about word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling. An excellent resource for teachers wanting to expand their spelling program from memorizing letter sequences for a weekly test - to word study that helps kids learn key patterns of how words work (the same patterns you are directly teaching during reading instruction). The book provides a wonderful assessment tool to find a students' level of word knowledge and details on how to build a word study program that matches their level. Based on an emerging research base (see Henderson, Templeton, et al.).

7) Read Well - Sprick et al. Sopris West, www.sopriswest.com, (800) 547-6747

Read Well is a field-tested reading program that artfully blends research-based skills instruction with strong literature foundations. Appropriate for both natural readers and students who need systematic instruction, *Read Well* provides an accelerated program for high performers and expanded lessons for high-risk readers. Its 38 units feature orally presented literature and expository text selections, daily decoding lessons, and daily passage reading to meet the needs of: First grade and remedial second and third grade students, Schools in search of an effective bridge to literature-based programs, Schools in need of a low-cost, systematic phonics program with rich literature interactions... *Read Well* is very solid.

8.) PALS Kinder , Gr. 1, & Upper Grade (Peer Assisted Learning Strategies) - Mathes, Torgesen, et al. (1999), Available from Sonoma County SELPA (707) 524-2750 - soon to be published by Sopris West. Based on the classwide peer tutoring model designed and validated by Greenwood et al. and later adapted by Fuchs and Fuchs at Vanderbilt. PALS is a structured partner practice program, one for K (letter knowledge and phoneme awareness), grade one (decoding and fluency), and upper grade fluency and comprehension strategies. It is NOT a complete intervention curriculum, rather it is designed as a practice program to ensure differentiation of instruction and active participation by each student. PALS has excellent research data to support it's effectiveness.

9.) Alphagram Learning Materials - www.alphagram.com - 1 888 - READ. Excellent supplementary materials for K-2 reading, inexpensive too. Assisted by expert reading teachers like Ruth Nathan, these materials are fun/useful/easy to utilize. One of my favs is the "is it a word- or not?" flip book of letter combinations - kind of a spin on making words but with no letter tiles to dump on the floor etc. (all on key rings) - very nifty and effective.

10.) SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, & Sight Words) -

Developmental Studies Center - (510) 533-0213 and now distributed by Scholastic at: www.scholastic.com
Another excellent resource by Dr. John Shefelbine - excellent for gr. K - 3/5 in general ed. and/or intervention to systematically teach beginning decoding through polysyllabic word reading and for older students at any age who need the skills. SIPPS comes in three levels: 1) Beginning Level (short vowel/single syllable

decoding), 2) Extension Level (complex vowels/single syllable decoding), and 3) Challenge Level (polysyllabic decoding). SIPPS has correlated story books/sound-spelling cards/sight word cards/etc.

** I would now add the Houghton-Mifflin 2002 series to the general education core program list, as well as the new Harcourt Program (although not approved in California) in addition to Open Court.

Technology Based Reading Related Programs

Note: Many of these programs have scant evidence to support their use, some have a degree of pre test/post test evaluation but not well controlled research. None the less, computer based support for improving literacy does hold out much promise and another resource worth providing to students with reading difficulties as a supplement to excellent teacher directed instruction and independent reading. KF

Motivation & Record Keeping Software

** **NOTE:** These are NOT reading programs, there is NO instruction involved in them!! However, they are very useful in terms of matching student reading ability to text difficulty and in providing a motivational framework for some students who are not yet connected to the intrinsic joys of reading. KF

1.) Accelerated Reader/Advantage Learning Systems - 800 890 -1472, www.advlearn.com

Accelerated reader is a nifty reading monitoring & motivation system. Kids read books off line and take simple, but reliable, on line reading tests to validate they got the basics of the story. All data is charted and tracked for the teacher and kids. STAR uses a cloze or maze test to ascertain reading levels, not as valid as oral reading - but as good as can be done on a computer & many report they are quite accurate. Thousands of titles are leveled by readability helping teachers pin point instructional and independent reading levels. A useful tool, but NOT an instructional program. (Math is their new product...)

2.) Reading Counts/Scholastic Reading Inventory - Scholastic - (800) 724-6527, www.scholastic.com

Reading Counts offers easy-to-use, computerized quizzes on popular, high-quality books. Students select a book from more than 20,000 outstanding titles. After students read the book, they take a custom-generated quiz that verifies their reading comprehension and provides immediate feedback. After the quiz, they receive a point score in recognition of their reading accomplishments. A new product (actually an expansion of an old one bought out by Scholastic) designed to give AR a run for their money. Scholastic Reading Inventory is a nifty computer based assessment of comprehension that reports out in Lexile Levels.

3.) Bookadventure.org - a web based reading incentive, motivation, and record keeping program that is FREE!! It has over 3,000 titles in the database (with more added all the time) that can be searched by reading level, topic, author... a wonderful resource that is sponsored by Sylvan Learning Systems, Lycos, and Barnes & Noble... www.bookadventure.org.

Phonemic Awareness

1.) Daisy's Quest and Daisy's Castle - Great Wave Software, (800) 423-1144, www.greatwave.com

Designed by noted researcher Joe Torgesen and colleagues, these two programs have proved to be effective for primary age students needing to practice key phonemic awareness skills such as sound blending sound segmenting, sound rhyming, etc. Three controlled studies by Torgesen et al. indicate Daisy does build PA skills in young children. Daisy is very inexpensive and represents one nice use of technology to build language.

2.) Earobics - (888) 328 - 8199, www.cogcon.com

Developmental Ages 4-7. Earobics Step 1 features six interactive games, each with as many as 114 levels of play, that systematically teach the critical phonological awareness, auditory processing and phonics skills required for learning how to read. Earobics is sort of like a higher tech Daisy, same ideas but with more graphics, better sound, more sophisticated teacher control and progress monitoring. Evaluations currently underway...

3.) Waterford Early Reading Program - (510) 742-0552 - Scott Foresman.

The BMW of these programs, very expensive and very good, at least in K. It has it all, good research support, wonderful content, sophisticated user control & progress monitoring - very impressive program. If you have the budget - well worth checking out. They have just released a grade one reading program that also looks interesting, however one evaluation in Texas did not find any gains with it... so, the "jury" is still out!

4.) **Fast Forward** - Scientific Learning Corp. 1-510-665-9700 or toll free 888-665-9707 - Designed and researched by Paula Tallal and David Merzenich. Fast ForWord does **not** teach children to read. Fast ForWord is, however, an effective pre-reading program for many children. Fast ForWord training focuses on language skills that are necessary for many children to learn before they can make significant progress in reading. Scientific Learning Corporation **believes** that there is a continuum of language skills needed to learn to read. These skills included phonemic awareness and differentiation, phonological awareness, morphology, grammar, syntax, and language comprehension. There is much to be interested in here but with cautions - the program does not teach reading, it is very expensive, and is not the cure all some parent advocates and others like to claim... and we have no evidence that this expensive option is any better than some of the more modest options noted above... **let the buyer beware!**

5.) **LeapFrog School House** - www.leapfrogschoolhouse.com, 800.883-7430
An interactive multisensory/multi-media curriculum. The Leap into Literacy curriculum, helps students "leap into learning" within a classroom setting, combines touch, sight, and sound in Pre-K and K-2 packages. Top flight reading researchers Drs. Bob Calfee, Anne Cunningham, & Ruth Nathan consulted with LeapFrog to insure it aligns best practices in the research literature. LeapFrog uses a combination of audio books, "Leap Pad", Leap Desk" with talking letters, phonograms, words, and more... (this would also fit under the "beginning reading" category below).

Beginning Reading & Early Reading Tech Based Support Programs

1.) **Scholastic Interactive Phonics Readers** - - 800 724-6527 www.scholastic.com
This program is wonderful - using the Shefelbine Phonics readers with all kinds of top notch practice activities (e.g. phonemic matching, blending, spelling, oral reading, etc.). This provides a wonderful way to differentiate by providing students extra practice and support beyond your excellent teacher directed instruction. These CD's are a good example what reading support technology for young readers should look like in my opinion.

2.) **Little Planet Literacy Series** - (800) 974 - 2248, www.littleplanet.com
Designed and validated by the Learning Technology Center at Vanderbilt University, Little Planet is a K-4 package that provides a comprehensive, multimedia, language and literacy program that builds on the reading writing connections using literature. Evaluations suggest that is helpful for building reading comprehension and vocabulary.

3.) **Wiggleworks** - Scholastic - (800) 724-6527 www.scholastic.com
WiggleWorks, the Scholastic Beginning Literacy System, is a multimedia, interactive CD-ROM based reading and writing program for grades K-2. The WiggleWorks literacy program was recently developed by Scholastic Publishing Company and the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST). Recent third party studies indicate that Wiggleworks increased various forms of literacy development in grade one students. I have some concerns about the use of WW with struggling readers due to it's incidental teaching of work attack/ decoding skills (I find the Interactive Readers by Shefelbine to have a far better design for young readers).

4.) **The Learning Company - Reader Rabbit** - www.learningco.com
Produces a wide range of educational software and related products. An integrated approach to beginning reading instruction K-1. Reader Rabbit's Interactive Reading Journey 1, was designed by educators, curriculum specialists, and reading experts to help beginning readers build skills and confidence in reading. The program systematically combines three activity components word recognition, phonics, and progressively challenging stories.

5.) **Read Write & Type!** - The Learning Company, CNS Media Learning Center, (415) 456-4853, Jeannine Herron, Director. A systematic 40 level reading-writing curriculum linking each speech sound (phoneme) with a letter or pair of letters and with finger strokes on a keyboard. Recent research conducted in Fremont USD found this program boosted grade one students reading and spelling scores significantly. Another study conducted by Torgesen found RWT was as successful as the Lindamood LIPS (ADD) program in boosting phonemic awareness and beginning reading skills. Hall & Moats in their book for parents, [Straight Talk About Reading](#), call RWT the best technology based beginning reading on the market today... New versions are being produced under a NICHD grant to incorporate better assessment and progress monitoring features, plus Spanish translations! Well worth a look!

6.) **Intellitools - Balanced Literacy for Beginning Readers** - www.intellitools.com/, 800-899-6687 This wonderful CD has 9 anchor stories, 100 electronic books, and tons of correlated activities in word study, phonics, spelling using an onset/rime approach. This program was researched with a NICHD grant and proven to be a very effective supplement for at risk students needing more differentiated practice. I

would add a note here - to be sure to teach students sound by sound blending before they transition into onset/rime, research by Ehri et al. suggests struggling readers do not generalize onset/rime well - and do best if taught sound by sound in addition to onset/rime.

7.) Read Naturally - (800) 788-4085, readnat@aol.com , www.readnaturally.com

Designed and validated by long time Title One teacher and reading specialist Candyce Ihnot, Read Naturally is a fluency development program that is garnering rave reviews across the country. It uses 3 research based strategies to build fluency: teacher modeling, repeated readings, progress monitoring in a simple yet effective format that kids love. Sold by the unit from .8 to 7.0 grade/reading levels each with pre-recorded tapes or CD ROMs to go with the reading selections. Since this is a practice - not a teaching program, it can be easily run by a paraeducator...and kids love the reading selections... Read Naturally is very nifty

48) Word Sort - www.HendersonEdSoft.com - based on the well respected work of Words Their Way authors; Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston - this share-ware provides a wide range of computer based word sorts sequenced by level of difficulty and time. The software is easy to use, teacher friendly, and totally appropriate for kids-adults since it is not at all "cutesy"... VERY cool software in my opinion (see Hanlon, Cantrell; Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Sept, 1999 for research support for this tool.

9.) Words Their Way Interactive Resource CD ROM - Prentice Hall, www.prenhall.com/bear This CD is an excellent resource for spelling/word study/phonics work based on the book, Words Their Way by Bear et al. (2000). It contains games, word sorts, word lists, Spanish instruction information, guidelines for assessing students to match level to activities, and much more. The authors also have a nice website full of resources you can check out at: www.prenhall.com/bear Word study/spelling is very powerful when correlated with your reading instruction program. These two word sorting CD's provide useful tools for teachers to engage all students at their instructional level. (note: this is **FREE** to individual teachers - download a copy today!!)

10.) Inspiration 7.0 & Kidspiration - (800) 877-4292 <http://www.inspiration.com/>

The premier tool to develop ideas and organize thinking to support reading comprehension, pre-writing, outlining, etc. Inspiration 6 integrates an expanded range of visual learning and thinking techniques with the latest standards in graphics and Internet technology. Use it to brainstorm, organize thoughts and communicate ideas.. it is very cool - Also see the U of Oregon "Computer Based Study Strategies" site for tons of ideas/support/training using Inspiration, Co-Writer and more: <http://npip.com/CBSS/> or call (541) 346-2623... FREE training supported by the US Office of Special Education is currently available - check it out!

Afterward

Technology oriented resources are literally exploding. The above listing will be out of date immediately and is incomplete right now! I advise folks to be "skeptically open minded". While there is much to be optimistic about very little of the commercial software is even field tested or pre/post test evaluated in real school settings - let alone studied with proper controls. However, I find much to be hopeful about in terms of the uses of technology to support literacy development in diverse learners. It is a "natural" for many reason; kids tend to like it, ease of differentiation to meet individual needs, computers are patient, etc. There are good programs available currently and many more are in production... just keep those "show me the evidence" glasses on! KF