

ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE READING PROGRAM

These elements are part of *Right Track Reading Lessons*

You can directly help your child achieve reading success by using an effective direct systematic phonics program and explicitly teaching all skills necessary for the complex task of reading. Elements of an effective reading program include:

1. Must Be an Effective Direct Systematic Phonics Based Program: The child needs to learn to read by using phonologic processing. The most effective way to ensure children convert print to sound and develop the phonologic processing necessary for proficient reading is to teach them with a strong direct systematic phonics-first program. Explicitly teach children to convert letters into sounds and blend these sounds into words. Validated research shows this type of direct-systematic-phonics instruction has significant benefits for children in K through 6th grade and in children having difficulty learning to read. ¹ In addition, researchers have provided neurobiological proof that instruction with direct-phonological-based reading programs develops neural pathways for proficient reading in both children and adults.

Effective phonics based programs teach students printed letters represent specific sounds and how to blend these sounds into words. They teach the child to approach reading by sounding out words. To maximize effectiveness, you need to teach the student *explicitly* and *directly* in a *systematic* and *complete* manner. An important note: this absolutely is *not* a blanket endorsement for all ‘phonics’ programs. Many programs labeled ‘phonics’ use indirect, embedded methods, are incomplete or rely on indirect memorization of long complex lists of rules. In addition, many so called ‘phonics’ programs are in fact whole word or literature based programs with a token addition of a few sounds.

Parents and teachers should use direct systematic phonics based instructional programs in teaching children to read because these programs give us the tools to directly develop the phonologic processing necessary for proficient reading. All reading instructional approaches are NOT equal in effectiveness. Direct systematic phonologic based instructional approaches are more effective than other approaches to reading instruction. This is not opinion. This is clearly revealed by the neurobiological science as well as proven by valid evidence based research. The article *Direct Systematic Phonics Instruction Proven Effective! Why Parents & Teachers Should Use Direct Systematic Phonics* contains further details and links to research. This article is found at www.righttrackreading.com/directphonicsworks.html.

2. Teach All Skills Directly: Always explicitly teach children exactly what they need to know. Never leave it to chance for a child to self discover essential elements. Direct instruction prevents situations where children do not learn because they inadvertently missed essential information. While some students may be able to learn with indirect, analytic, embedded or incidental approaches, many do *not* acquire necessary skills. At best, indirect and embedded instructional methods are inefficient. To maximize effectiveness and efficiency, directly teach all skills. Ensure your child learns!

3. Teach In a Systematic Manner: Present information in a deliberate, pre-planned, carefully controlled manner. Reading is a complex learned skill. This step-by-step instruction allows the child time to practice and master individual skills before additional information and complexities are taught. Start simple. Introduce new skills and knowledge a bit at a time, adding complexity as the child learns. Examples of systematic instruction include teaching sounds a few at a time, teaching the simple sounds before adding in complexities, teaching blending with easier consonant-vowel-consonant words before adding in the harder consonant blends, and beginning with simple single syllable words before adding in multi-syllable words. The English language is complex. Systematic presentation helps children manage and master the complexities. A carefully designed program that directly teaches the *complete* code and progressively builds skills and knowledge in a direct systematic manner prevents the chaos and confusion created when you toss the entire English language at the child at one time. Carefully controlled systematic presentation helps children make sense of and learn our complex written language.

4. Always Provide Immediate Correction: Immediate correction is essential in beginning reading so the child learns and develops proper skills. It is a disservice to allow a child to learn, perform and practice skills incorrectly. It is always easier to learn correctly than to go back and unlearn incorrect habits. If the child can not correct himself or doesn't understand, stop and teach the missing skill. As the teacher, it is your job to ensure the child learns correctly. Correction is NOT a negative action but rather a positive opportunity to help the child learn.

¹ National Reading Panel's "Teaching Children to Read" Summary Report www.nationalreadingpanel.org/publications/summary.htm

5. Develop Phonemic Awareness and Link this Phonemic Awareness to Print: Directly develop phonemic awareness skills. Although some individuals have a definite natural phonological weakness, phonemic awareness (PA) can be taught and learned. The scientific evidence proves PA instruction has a significant positive effect on both reading and spelling. Directly teach children how to hear, recognize and manipulate sounds within words. To maximize effectiveness for reading, this PA training needs to directly link the oral PA skills to print.

6. Develop and Engrain Proper Tracking: To read proficiently the child must automatically process *all* the letters in a word *in order from left-to-right*. It is important to directly teach and emphasize proper directional tracking to beginning readers. Many young children make frequent tracking errors where they look at all the letters at once or hop around searching for letters or portions of words they recognize. Preventing these incorrect strategies requires direct work on proper tracking skills. Require the child to physically point and move their finger left-to-right. The multisensory benefits of the finger movement (kinetic motion) develop and engrain this essential subskill.

7. Teach Smooth Blending: The skill of smoothly blending individual sounds together into words is critical. The child needs to learn how to say the sounds smoothly without pausing between sounds. Choppy/segmented sounding out makes it difficult for children to hook the sounds together into a word. They might know all the individual sounds but by the time they get to the end of the word with separated choppy sounding out they forget what sounds they just said or add in extra sounds when they try to put it all together. If the child keeps sounds smoothly 'hooked' together, the word doesn't 'fall apart'. Directly teach smooth blending so the child masters this essential skill. In addition, the instructor needs to *always demonstrate and require the correct smooth blending technique* of not pausing between the sounds.

8. Teach the Complete Phonetic Code: The child needs to look at the black printed letter(s) and immediately and directly process the correct sound for the *complete* phonetic code. A well designed direct systematic phonics program teaches the direct print-to-sound relationship for the complete phonetic code including the multiple sounds for the vowels, the consonant digraphs, vowel combinations, r-controlled vowels and other complexities. Although it is best to start with the simple and most frequently encountered sounds, it is not adequate to stop there. It is essential to teach the complete code necessary to master our complex phonemic based written English language. The sound knowledge needs to be direct, automatic, and phonetically correct print-to-sound. Effective programs directly and systematically teach the accurate print=sound relationships and allow sufficient practice to build automaticity.

9. Provide Sufficient Practice Sounding Out Decodable Words To Develop Phonologic Processing: An effective direct systematic phonics program needs to do more than tell the child to convert letters to sound and blend sound together when reading. The program must provide adequate practice with correct phonologic decoding of words. The child *must* practice applying phonologic processing by reading **decodable** words in guided instruction with feedback.

In reading instruction, the term '**decodable**' refers to words containing only the phonetic code the child has already learned. To determine if text is decodable you need to *evaluate the phonetic structure of the words and compare it to the code knowledge the child has already acquired*. We often think of 'decodable' text as phonetically simple words and text. Although decodable text is simple in the beginning when the child has limited knowledge of the phonemic code, decodable text expands as the child learns more of the phonemic code.

In beginning reading, it is critical for the child to read phonetically decodable text because it allows the child to apply correct phonologic processing skills. If the child reads text that is NOT decodable (contains sounds child has not yet learned) he is unable to use correct phonologic processing and therefore often applies incorrect reading strategies that lead to reading difficulties. To become a proficient reader, the child *must develop and practice correct phonologic processing*. Decodable text allows the child to actually build correct print-to-sound phonologic processing pathways.

The purpose of having the child read simple decodable text such as 'The map is flat.' or "The pup will swim in the pond' is to intentionally help the child establish essential phonologic processing pathways. Decodable text is a temporary restriction to help the child build necessary skills. The use of decodable text in beginning reading does not limit children, but rather is the effective tool to build vital skills so they become proficient readers and can later access the vast opportunities of skilled reading. Having a child read decodable text is similar to teaching a child to play the piano. You don't ask a beginner to play complex pieces of music. The beginner starts with individual notes and simple songs. As the child learns more notes, practices and advances she is able to play more songs correctly. Similarly, as the child learns more sounds, the material that is decodable rapidly expands. Before long the child is able to read any appropriate book.

The requirement for beginners to read decodable text absolutely does NOT mean you need to avoid reading engaging books to your child. The use of decodable text *only* applies to the material *the child reads to you* when the child is first learning how to read! This prudent use of decodable text never limits the text *you read to your child*. You definitely should be exposing your child to a wide range of books and true literature. Use of decodable text to help your child develop and practice reading skills never prevents or limits access and exposure to wonderful children's books.

As with all learned complex skills, practicing correct phonologic processing of decodable words is essential. Correct phonologic processing requires integration and application of phonemic awareness, knowledge of the code, proper tracking smooth blending and attention to detail in the process of sounding out words. Lots of practice reading decodable text is essential for helping children build proficiency.

10. Use Targeted Multisensory Processes: Multisensory processes refer to utilizing the different senses to aid learning. The general concept is we learn and remember more when we involve multiple senses including visual processes (pictures, 'seeing' images), auditory/oral processes (listening and talking), and physical/kinetic processes (motion, hands on, doing). Multisensory instruction applies two or more of these senses to enhance learning. *However*, to be effective in developing reading skills these multisensory activities must be carefully targeted. Multi-sensory approaches in themselves will not help a child learn to read *unless* they directly build the exact skills necessary for proficient reading. Effective multisensory activities directly teach correct directional tracking, develop phonemic awareness, create a direct and automatic link between print and sound, teach smooth blending, and establish correct phonologic processing. It is not the multisensory process itself but the application of these multi-sensory processes to the development of specific skills that is key to enhanced learning.

For instance, neural research clearly identifies directly converting print to sound is necessary to develop proficient reading pathways. This direct link between printed letter and correct sound is the skill activities must target. An effective multisensory instructional activity is to have the child write the printed letter while saying the sound. This simple action directly links the motion of forming the printed letter (kinetic), image of the completed letter (visual) to saying and hearing the correct sound (auditory). This targeted application and integration of the multisensory processes is highly effective in helping the child learn the necessary skill.

In contrast, multisensory activities not targeted to develop necessary skills (based on the science of proficient reading) have limited benefit. Activities can even be detrimental if they unintentionally create incorrect processing or utilize energy for indirect efforts. A jumping jack, dance or hand sign are misguided application of the kinetic process because these motions are unrelated to skills necessary for reading print. These activities may actually develop indirect, inefficient processing. We know auditory and oral processes of saying and hearing sounds are critical to phonologic processing. However, orally chanting words or singing songs without linking them visually to the printed letters will not directly develop necessary skills of converting printed letters to their correct sound, blending these sounds into words and developing phonologic processing pathways. Similarly, looking at objects or images, color coding, and other unrelated visual activities are misguided. Teaching a child to visual 'recognize' words by overall appearance (sight word approach) is detrimental because it undermines the phonologic processing essential for proficient reading. Remember, to be effective, multisensory activities *must* focus on developing necessary skills.

Mixed in with multisensory instruction, there is often discussion about 'multiple intelligences' and 'multiple learning styles'. These terms refer to theories how individuals have specific strengths and how some children learn better with certain styles. This theory professes views such as a child with strong 'visual intelligence' learns better with visual instructional approaches and a child with strong 'auditory intelligence' learns best with oral instructional methods. It is very important to realize while individuals absolutely do have specific strengths, this does not mean that proficient reading is achieved by many different pathways. The neural science is clear. To read proficiently the child *must* convert print to sound and develop phonologic processing pathways. An assumption such as strong visual learners would best learn to read using visual processing completely ignores and contradicts the science of proficient reading. In fact, this false assumption is most detrimental to children with the naturally strong 'visual intelligence' and weak phonemic awareness as these children are least likely to develop the necessary phonemic processing on their own. Instruction that encourages the use of visual processing actually leads these strong 'visual' children further down the incorrect processing pathways. Reading instruction needs to be designed to develop the specific skills necessary for proficient reading.

An individual's unique strengths and weaknesses make it even more important to directly develop necessary skills. It is especially important to specifically teach, emphasize, and develop strong phonemic processing skills in children who are naturally weakest in these areas. Left on their own, many children with poor phonemic awareness rely on their natural strengths and fail to develop necessary phonologic processing pathways. It is also important to realize, building children's skills for proficient reading never negates or minimizes their other natural strengths. For instance, if a child has strong visual skills, developing his phonemic awareness and teaching him to read with phonologic processing will not eliminate his strong visual skills. It simply teaches him to apply phonologic processing when reading print. Effective reading instruction is not designed to match an individual's existing strengths but rather designed to intentionally develop and build skills and processes necessary for proficient reading.

In summary, multi-sensory activities are effective tools in helping students learn to read. However, these activities must be carefully designed and targeted to directly teach and reinforce the skills and knowledge necessary for proficient reading. While children may naturally have specific learning strengths and weaknesses, proficient reading requires the development of phonologic processing pathways. Effective reading programs use a variety of carefully designed and targeted multi-sensory activities to directly teach and develop these skills.

11. Emphasize Attention to Detail: To read proficiently, the child needs to learn to pay attention to detail. Teach the child to carefully look at all the sounds within a word and stop him immediately if he skips details. This emphasis on attention to detail is important in beginning reading to establish the essential habit of processing all details necessary for creating accurate neural models of words. Proper tracking is also intertwined into the attention to detail skill. An effective reading program directly teaches, develops and reinforces attention to detail essential to proficient reading.

12. Ensure Phonologic Processing - Avoid Sight/Whole Word Reading: It is important to avoid teaching a sight word approach where the child learns to "read" by trying to recognize what whole words "look like". Students who adopt this incorrect 'whole word' visual word-recognition strategy will struggle with reading. Effective instruction *must* prevent this detrimental process of trying to visually recognize entire words.

A 'whole word' approach to reading fails because there are too many words and words are too similar to learn by overall visual appearance. The linguistic fact is our written language is NOT made up of whole word "pictures" but sounds that blend together to form spoken words. Initially, a limited list of visually different words can be successfully "read" by whole word strategies and guessing. (For example, 'a, the, cat, ball, house, green') This whole word identification "instant reading" may be exciting at first but can encourage children to develop incorrect reading strategies where they equate "reading" to identifying what the word looks like, recognizing a few letters, and then "word guessing". Some children, especially those with strong visual memory skills, excel at this in the beginning. However, as vocabulary expands, visually similar words are encountered. *The student who has adopted a whole word reading strategy is certain to fail.* There are absolutely too many words. A child starts school with something like a 24,000 word speaking and listening vocabulary. His vocabulary is up above 40,000 by 3rd grade. It is impossible to learn such an extensive vocabulary visually as whole words. Words are also too visually similar. Only 26 letters make up all those words. To read proficiently, the neural imaging studies confirm the child must look at each letter in order and process it phonologically.

Difficulties are apparent when observing children who were instructed in whole word methods and adopted 'whole word' visual reading strategies. Their reading errors clearly reflect how they look at appearance or physical structure of the word, look only at a few letters or at part of the word, mix up the order of letters, or simply make wild guesses. These children say "very" for the word every, "made" for dim, "doctor" for describe, "sleep" for speed, "smell" for small, "volume" for value, "have" for van, "poured" for sprout, "mile" for lime, "nice" for since, and "soft" for often. They wildly guess uncommon learned words like "chimp" for chart and "prehistoric" for plenty. Frequently, the errors and 'guesses' are words they visually memorized. They look at very simple phonetic words like "rod" and "fat" and say, "I don't know the word". They cannot read simple phonetic words yet can recognize a word like 'elephant'. All these are actual observed examples. In closer evaluation, these children often have poor phonemic awareness, do not know many necessary sounds, do not track letters in order left-to-right, do not process all letters, and have poor blending skills. Sadly, they never learned HOW to read and instead adopted a strategy of trying to memorize the appearance of words - a strategy guaranteed to fail. The brain imaging research on dyslexia confirms and explains why whole word approaches fail. Proficient reading is dependant on phonological analysis. While some words are not completely phonetic and are read partly by "sight", visual recognition sight word/whole word reading should *not* be taught as a reading strategy.

13. Teach Phonetically Accurate Representations of Print - Avoid teaching “word families” and “blended consonants” as unique units: Teach the child phonetically accurate representations of print. Avoid inaccurate representations of print such as word families (at, ig, it, am & hundreds of other possibilities) and blended consonant clusters (bl, cr, fl, st, sl, bl & other 60+ possible beginning and ending blends) as unique letter/sound units. It *adds hundreds of additional combinations* for the child to learn. Teach the necessary single sounds and blending skills and the child can then read all possible combinations. For example by knowing and blending 6 sounds (a e m n d t) the child can sound out 10 different common combinations (am, an, ad, at, and, em, en, ed, et, end). At best, teaching blended consonant and word family units is an inefficient and indirect way to teach blending skill. However, the serious concern is these incorrect representations actually may create reading difficulties in *some* students. Problems arise when children adopt a strategy of memorizing the cluster groups as visual units instead of processing each sound. Not only is the sheer number of combinations overwhelming but the visual similarities between the clusters make “what it looks like” strategies difficult for a child to master (such as bl, pl, lb, ld). In addition, if children hop around within words searching for familiar clusters and word families, they often confuse left-to-right tracking and sounding out skills. They inappropriately pull out word family combinations such as ‘it’ from wait, ‘in’ from coin, and ‘ag’ from page. These blended consonant clusters and word family units encourage some students to skip processing all letters. Children who learn with consonant clusters frequently insert blended sounds when they are not present. They read camp as ‘clamp’, tack as ‘track’, fake as ‘flake’, tide as ‘tride’, and set as ‘sent’. Because they learned the cluster as a unit they actually ‘see’ the cluster when it is not there. These difficulties are all actual errors made by children taught with word family and consonant cluster techniques.

It is simpler, more effective and prevents potential reading problems to teach children necessary sounds and develop phonemic awareness and blending skills to combine all sounds. Children do need direct practice handling blended consonants sounds. Practice blended consonants as processing and blending the individual sounds NOT by clusters. For example, teach ‘flap’ as blending /f/ /l/ /a/ /p/ NOT /fl/ /a/ /p/. Same with “word families”; teach blending individual sounds /s/ /a/ /t/ NOT /sa/ /at/. Word families and blended consonant clusters are inaccurate representations of our language. These shortcuts can bypass the process of careful attention to detail, and unintentionally create reading difficulties in some children. Attention to phonetic accuracy is important in building a strong foundation for reading success.

14. Guided Oral Reading is Essential: Guided reading is reading out loud to an adult, or other proficient reader, with feedback. It is *not* independent silent reading. The key component is ‘guided’. Correction and instruction help the child learn and improve skills. Validated research shows guided out loud reading has significant beneficial impact on word recognition, fluency and comprehension across a range of grade levels.² Guided reading benefits both good and struggling readers. In contrast, silent independent reading may *not* actually improve reading skills for beginning readers. Numerous studies show the best readers read the most and poor readers read the least. However, these studies are correlational. Good readers may simply spend more time reading. Although it sounds like a good idea to have students read more alone, there is *no* research evidence showing *independent silent reading* improves reading skills. If children sit flipping pages and making errors, their skills will not improve. In contrast, *guided* oral reading helps children improve skills. This is NOT saying children should not read to themselves, or there are no benefits for children looking at books, or students do not need to read more. Rather, it says *to improve skills*, particularly in learning stages, children need to read *out loud with feedback*. At more advanced levels, silent reading does improve the higher skills of fluency, comprehension and vocabulary. Guided reading has a *significant* beneficial impact on developing reading skills and should be a part of reading instruction. Guided reading is an integral part of the *Right Track Reading Lessons*.

15. Develop Fluency: Fluency is the ‘fast’ or ‘automatic’ reading where words appear to be almost instantly recognized. Fluent readers read quickly and accurately without effort. Fluency is the objective of phonologic decoding. The critical information to keep in mind for effective reading instruction is fluency or ‘fast reading’ is developed word by word based on repeated accurate phonologic processing of specific words. To build fluency, the child must *first* read by correct, accurate phonologic processing (sounding out the word). This foundation of correct phonologic processing is the essential precursor to develop fluency. Children do not become ‘fluent readers’ overnight but rather build fluency word-by-word over time. With repeated practice correctly reading individual words, the child adds to his storehouse of ‘fast’/fluent words. Guided reading builds fluency. Practice to build fluency is incorporated into the *Right Track Reading Lessons* as words are repeatedly included for reading practice in the word lists and sentences.

² National Reading Panel’s “Teaching Children to Read” Summary Report www.nationalreadingpanel.org/publications/summary.htm

16. Teach Strategies for Handling Multisyllable Words: It is more difficult to process multisyllable words than simple one syllable words. The majority of English words are multisyllable so it is critical for children to acquire strategies to read them effectively. A reading program should include both direct instruction and guided practice in handling multisyllable words. Direct practice with common affixes is also effective in helping students learn how to handle multisyllable words. Spelling can also be used as an effective tool for learning how to process these longer words.

17. Expand Vocabulary Knowledge: Expanding a student's vocabulary knowledge is important to reading development. Vocabulary instruction leads to gains in comprehension. A comprehensive reading program needs to include vocabulary development. Children acquire vocabulary both incidentally through exposure and through direct vocabulary instruction. It has been shown various techniques designed to directly build vocabulary are effective in expanding vocabulary knowledge and improving reading comprehension. Optimal learning occurs when vocabulary instruction involves a combination of different techniques.

18. Directly Develop Reading Comprehension Skills: Comprehension is deriving meaning from text. Parents and teachers can take direct actions to help children develop specific comprehension skills and strategies. While readers acquire some comprehension strategies informally, explicit or formal instruction in the application of comprehension strategies has been shown to be highly effective in enhancing understanding.³ These strategies help children think about, remember, and understand what they are reading. Comprehension strategies are effective for non-impaired readers. Remember, if the child has decoding difficulties you need to *first* establish the necessary fundamental decoding skills of proficient phonologic processing. Otherwise the difficulty decoding will likely inhibit the development of the more advanced comprehension. Children may have no difficulty decoding but struggle with comprehension and need direct instruction in developing comprehension skills. Reading programs should include direct instruction in developing comprehension skills. The majority of comprehension development can be accomplished as a part of guided reading.

19. Practice reading: Read! Read! Read! Daily reading is essential. Children should read a *minimum* of 20 minutes a day. Of course, more is better! In learning stages the majority of reading time should be guided reading (out loud with feedback) of decodable text. As the child's skills develop, reading will shift primarily to independent silent reading.

In general children should read level appropriate material. Obviously, 'appropriate' is a relative term and a child's reading level will change and advance as age and skills advance. The appropriateness of material also varies, depending if the child is reading alone or reading out loud with feedback. Multiple formal methods and systems for evaluating and rating 'reading level' exist. Most are based on readability factors such as vocabulary, number of multisyllable words, sentence length and structure, grammar, and complexity of story plot. A few rating systems consider suitability of the content. Many of these systems provide numerical ratings to evaluate and compare books. These technical methods attempt to provide objective information on the actual 'reading level' of a particular book. The reading level needs to be considered relative to the individual's skills to determine what is 'appropriate' for the child. In addition to the formal methods, you can simply listen to your child read and then adjust material to fit. The following simple rule of thumb can be used to help you determine if a book is the appropriate reading level for a particular student at a certain time and situation:

Independent level: This is material the student can read with few errors. If the student makes only a few errors on a page the material is at the independent level. This 'easy' or independent level is ideal for silent reading.

Instructional level: The learning level material is where the student reads with some errors and skill building. If the student makes 4 or more errors per page the material is considered instructional level. This instructional or learning level is ideal for guided reading so you can help the child develop skills.

Frustration level: This is where the material is really 'too hard' or advanced. The student makes frequent errors in every paragraph. It is best to avoid frustration level material by selecting another book. If frustration level material must be read, it should be read as guided reading with assistance.

When a child learns to read proficiently, he should be able to read all grade level material. In other words, a 2nd grader might not be able to read *Eragon* but should be able to read *My Father's Dragon*. A 6th grader may have difficulty reading a college level physics textbook but should not struggle with her middle school science textbook or other classroom material. If grade level material is consistently not 'appropriate' for your child, chances are the child is lacking necessary decoding skills and need direct instruction in developing the necessary phonologic processing skills.

³ National Reading Panel's "Teaching Children to Read" Summary Report www.nationalreadingpanel.org/publications/summary.htm

20. Share the joy of reading: And as always, share the joy of reading. Reading is wonderful. Children have a natural excitement about reading that can be tapped into. Teaching your child to read using a direct systematic phonics program does not preclude enjoyment and excitement with reading. In fact, it is the ability to read well that removes roadblocks and provides the route to reading enjoyment. The often quoted observation ‘good readers’ like to read and ‘poor readers’ do not enjoy reading is absolutely true. However, this is a correlational, not cause and effect, relationship. This tendency to spend time and enjoy what we are good at is simply human nature. Rarely do we ‘enjoy’ an activity we struggle at, make frequent frustrating errors and can only accomplish with difficulty. When children learn how to read they then are able to become ‘engaged’ and ‘excited’ about reading.

An effective reading program intentionally develops necessary proficient reader skills. Structured reading lessons teach your student *how* to read. However, the lessons alone will not ensure your child achieves a love of reading. Parents and teachers absolutely need to encourage and promote a love of reading. Expose students to a wide variety of literature. Help them discover the amazing wealth of information contained in books. Encourage children to read. Go to the library frequently. If he loves trains, let him pick out 14 train books. Help your daughter unpack the box of well worn favorite horse stories her aunt sent her. Give your child a flashlight so she can re-read all the *Little House* books under the covers after lights out. Read all the *RedWall* books with him so you can discuss the details of how the brave mouse warrior and his woodland friends defeat the evil horde of vermin. Read the newspaper sports page at breakfast. Look up information on how to take care of kittens. Read a nightly Bible verse. Read the same favorite book over and over. Enjoy books! However, do not skip the important step of carefully teaching your child *how* to read. Help your child become a ‘good reader’ so he or she is able to enjoy reading. Skilled reading is a key that unlocks the doors to limitless knowledge, enjoyment and adventure. Give your children this key by getting them on the right track to reading proficiency!

Action Plan to Get Your Child on Track to Reading Success

If your child is:

- **Pre-reader / Preschool** - Begin developing phonemic awareness, print awareness and alphabetic awareness. See Appendix F and www.rightrackreading.com for additional information.
- **Beginning Reader Kindergarten/1st Grade** - Use *Right Track Reading Lessons* effective direct systematic phonics program to establish phonologic processing pathways and directly build skills to develop proficient reading.
- **Novice reader in 1st/2nd grade needing to advance to higher level skills** – Directly build skills with *Right Track Reading Lessons*. Many novice readers have a foundation with basic sounds yet lack knowledge of the complete code including vowel and r-controlled vowel combinations and can not handle multisyllable words. This complete systematic phonics program ensures foundational phonologic processing, directly teaches the complete code complexities, develops skills in handling multisyllable words and helps the child advance skills.
- **Struggling with Reading** - Struggling readers are lacking essential skills and need direct effective intervention to develop necessary skills and build proficient reader neural pathways. Do not wait for the child to ‘outgrow’ his reading problems. Research data reveals this rarely happens. As students get older, difficulty reading handicaps them further in all subject areas. Continuing to read the ‘incorrect’ way, additional practice of incorrect strategies, or repeating a program that failed the child the first time around will NOT help the child overcome his difficulties. Intervene immediately with an effective direct systematic phonics program. If your struggling reader is 1st, 2nd, or a young 3rd grader, use *Right Track Reading Lessons*. If your struggling reader is 3rd grade or older, use *Back on the Right Track Reading Lessons*, an effective reading remediation program targeted specifically for older struggling readers. This program directly helps your struggling reader build the skills necessary for achieving reading success. If your child is struggling with reading/dyslexic please see the detailed article *How to Help a Student Overcome Reading Difficulties and Achieve Success* located at www.rightrackreading.com/helpstudent.html

***Important Note:** If you have any concerns about a child’s hearing, vision, development or other medical concern, the child must be evaluated by a doctor or other appropriate professional. If the child has difficulty hearing (for whatever reason from an ear infection to a physical disability) it significantly impacts phonemic awareness and the ability to tap into correct phonologic processors. Children with uncorrected vision impairment will have challenges seeing the print. Any and all medical concerns need to be addressed by medical professionals.