



Study Guide

Know Better, Do Better

Teaching the Foundations so Every Child can Read

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This study guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular section. This guide is designed to help you reflect on and apply the ideas presented in the book by providing thoughtful questions and prompts.

We recommend using this companion piece for small groups or an entire faculty PLC, but it is also useful for individuals to review their understanding. Share your answers with your peers, leaders, or parent groups and learn what they have to share in turn.

If you are interested in booking the author for a virtual training, professional development day, or to provide feedback on the book, please contact pub@learningsciences.com.

Learning Sciences International thanks you for your interest in this book, and we hope that this guide proves a valuable addition and support to your professional development practices.

Chapter One: Letter Recognition and Alphabetic Knowledge

1. What exactly are alphabetic knowledge and letter recognition? Capture your own working definitions and check them against those offered in the chapter.
2. Why is knowing the names of letters of the alphabet helpful and important?
3. What are some fun and common ways to improve alphabetic knowledge?
4. What does rapid naming have to do with letter recognition?

5. Many millennials have reported they have trouble reading cursive writing because they were never taught how to write it. How does this connect to troubles caused by lack of letter recognition in reading?

6. Review the *Sources for Deeper Learning and Teaching* section on page 17. Have you used any of these resources before? Choose 3 new ones to explore and consider how they can inform your teaching or benefit your classroom—or how they might fall short in meeting your students' needs, and what other resources you might pair them with.

Resource 1:	
Resource 2:	
Resource 3:	

4. Review the *Sources for Deeper Learning and Teaching* section on page 25. Have you used any of these resources before? Choose 2 new ones to explore and consider how they can inform your teaching or benefit your classroom—or how they might fall short in meeting your students’ needs, and what other resources you might pair them with.

Resource 1:	
Resource 2:	

What I Do Now		
What I Want To Do For My Next Class		

4. There is some disagreement about whether or not early grade teachers should spend some time on getting children to hear random sounds (developing phonological awareness) vs. immediately focusing on letter sounds and developing phonemic awareness. What is your own position on this? Why?

5. Discuss the critical role rhyming (hearing and being able to make rhymes) plays in children learning to read.

6. Why does phonemic awareness ability predict student success in beginning reading so well?

7. Review the *Sources for Deeper Learning and Teaching* section on page 52. Have you used any of these resources before? Choose 2 new ones to explore and consider how they can inform your teaching or benefit your classroom—or how they might fall short in meeting your students' needs, and what other resources you might pair them with.

Resource 1:	
Resource 2:	

Chapter Four: The Case for Systematic Phonics

1. Were you taught or actively teaching during the Whole Language era? If so, what remembrances or feelings do you have about it? If not, what is your impression of it now?
2. What is the difference between Phonics, whole word, and whole language teaching? Which method does research show is most effective, and what do you use in your classroom?
3. Page 60 lists some of the major conclusions from the NRP's 2000 report. Have you seen any of these results in your own classroom when teaching phonics?
4. What's the difference between synthetic and analytic phonics? Which do you feel you have more familiarity with?

5. “Successful decoding doesn’t guarantee comprehension, but poor decoding guarantees poor comprehension” (pg 61). Elaborate on this point. What classroom experience do you have that supports it?

6. Conduct an inventory of your own thoughts, attitudes and feelings toward controlled readers for novice readers. Do you consider both leveled and decodable readers to be controlled and artificial, or only one type or the other?

7. Review the *Sources for Deeper Learning and Teaching* section on page 76. Have you used any of these resources before? Choose 1 new one to explore and consider how it can inform your teaching or benefit your classroom—or how it might fall short in meeting your students’ needs, and what other resources you might pair it with.

Resource 1:	
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7. Review the *Sources for Deeper Learning and Teaching* section on page 109. Have you used any of these resources before? Choose 2 new ones to explore and consider how they can inform your teaching or benefit your classroom—or how they might fall short in meeting your students' needs, and what other resources you might pair them with.

Resource 1:	
Resource 2:	

Chapter Six: Reading Fluency

1. How does your definition of reading fluency differ from the book? How does your understanding of this definition inform how you teach, and what you expect from (and assess), your students?

2. What are the two ways to improve fluency, supported by research? What does this look like in your classroom (how often do students have the opportunity to use these methods, how long does practice last, what sorts of text are used, is practice grouped or individual, etc)?

	In my classroom, we practice this by...
Method 1:	
Method 2:	

3. Challenge: Read the section on Fluency Packets, beginning on page 121. Select one text and have a copy printed for each of your students, with a place for parent signatures on the back. Devote 15 minutes of class and home time to fluency practice for one week, using the chart provided as a guide.

- a. How did your students like the activity?
- b. How did their fluency in the selected text change over the week?
- c. Were you able to tie the practice in to any other lessons?
- d. What would you do differently next time?

4. When the chapter discusses making sure students are “reading” punctuation, what does that mean to you?

5. Review the *Sources for Deeper Learning and Teaching* section on page 126. Have you used any of these resources before? Choose 1 new one to explore and consider how it can inform your teaching or benefit your classroom—or how it might fall short in meeting your students’ needs, and what other resources you might pair it with.

Resource 1:	
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Chapter Seven: Unfinished Learning and Older Students

1. Why is it important, and what methods can you use, to reassure students who have difficulty reading or are not on fluency grade level that they aren't unintelligent?
2. Think on a student you have had who was not on fluency grade level. How did you intervene with them? Did they leave your classroom on level with their peers? What would you have done differently, and what did working with that student teach you?
3. Why is it so important to get parent buy-in when working with older students who are struggling to read comfortably?

4. Oral fluency affects comprehension. What methods, including those listed here and those you use in your own practice, have you found to be consistently successful in increasing a student's fluency? Do the methods differ between older and younger students?

5. Why is it so important to use grade level text with students who aren't reading on grade level?

6. Could the culture of your school accommodate a school wide effort such as the partnered fluency project? If not, what would have to change to make something like this work in your setting? Do you think it could?

7. How do you feel about the competitive edge we suggest as options for some of the games we introduce in the second part of the chapter? How do you think your students, especially early adolescents would react to an element of competition in their work?

6. Review the *Sources for Deeper Learning and Teaching* section on page 154. Have you used any of these resources before? Choose 3 new ones to explore and consider how they can inform your teaching or benefit your classroom—or how they might fall short in meeting your students' needs, and what other resources you might pair them with.

Resource 1:	
Resource 2:	
Resource 3:	