



Research Foundation



Position Paper

April, 2025

Introduction

Definition of Reading

“Reading is a highly complex task that involves many interconnected and codependent linguistic processes that draw upon a variety of separate skills (ILA, 2018).”

Organization of Paper

The mission of *CR Success Learning* is to provide teachers with the knowledge, methods, and materials to teach the highly complex task of reading. This position paper is a thorough comparison of recent research and the literacy programs of *CRSL*. This comparison is organized around the findings of a number of studies, including the following:

Study by the Florida Center for Reading Research (Ardnt, 2007)

FCRR describes two characteristics of scientifically-based reading programs: **instructional content** and **instructional design**. Instructional content must provide explicit, sequential instruction in the five pillars of reading, as defined by the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. Instructional design must include explicit and systematic instructional strategies, coordinated instructional sequences, ample practice opportunities, and aligned student materials.

Article, *How the Science of Reading Informs 21st-Century Education* (Petscher, et al., 2020)

This article revisits the science of reading to clarify what constitutes compelling evidence in the science of reading. It confirms strong evidence for 1) teaching phonological awareness and letter knowledge, particularly when combined, 2) delivering explicit phonics instruction, 3) providing frequent opportunities to read, 4) developing the use of comprehension strategies, and 5) teaching key vocabulary, especially for older students.

Study by the Institute of Education Services (Foreman et al, 2016)

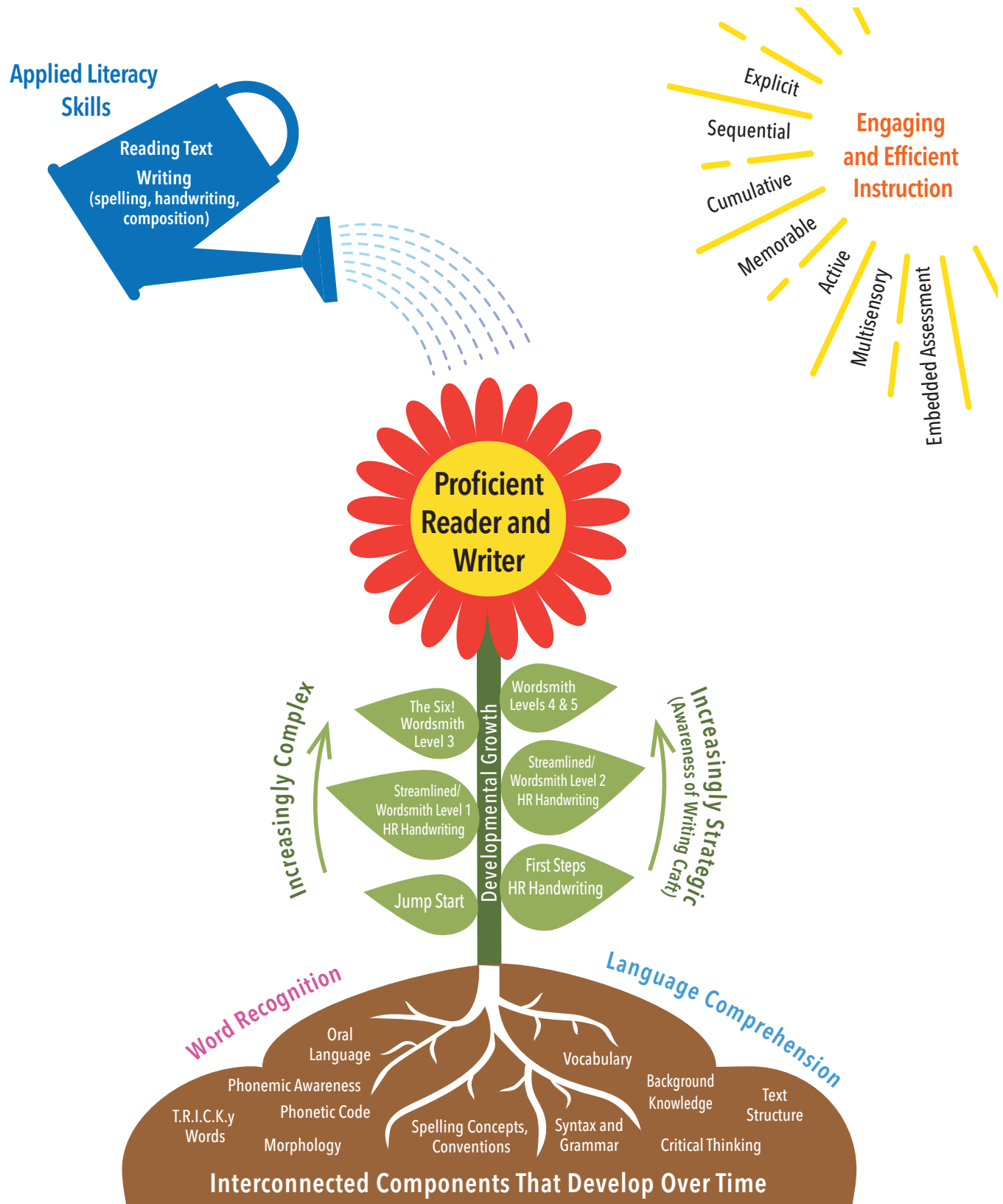
The guide by *IES* provides four **evidence-based recommendations** for teaching foundational reading skills K-3 (IES, 2016). These four recommendations are: 1) teach academic language skills, 2) develop awareness of sounds and link to letters, 3) teach students how to decode words, analyze words parts and write/read words, and 4) ensure that students read connected text every day.

Applicability to Students At-Risk and English Language Learners

The research cited in this paper is relevant to all learners and particularly to struggling readers. In the forward to *Whole-language High Jinks: How to Tell When Scientifically-based Reading Instruction Isn't* (Moats, 2007), the authors emphatically stated: “Identified and taught properly using scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) programs, students at risk of reading failure actually have good prospects for success.” In this article, Moats defined effective reading programs as ones that

- interweave several components of language into the same lesson
- build fluency in underlying reading skills and text reading with direct methods
- incorporate phonemic awareness into all reading instruction
- go beyond phonics to teach word structure and word origin
- build vocabulary
- support reading comprehension

CR Success Reading and Writing Model



The Science of Reading

Definition/Major Finding	What Research Tells Us	CR Success Learning's Approach
A Common Definition of the Science of Reading <i>“The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages. The science of reading has culminated in a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties.”</i> — The Science of Reading: Defining Guide by the Reading League, 2020	Qualities of the Science of Reading • is not one program or set of programs; instead, it is the body of research from many disciplines that has been conducted over many years and that continues to grow • increases our understanding of how reading is processed in the brain • reveals how efficient neural pathways are built with explicit instruction and intentional practices • shows that both language comprehension and word recognition are necessary for students to become strong readers • emphasizes explicit, systematic instruction in the structure of the English language • focuses on phonology, sound-symbol (phonics), syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics • demonstrates the interconnectedness of the above-mentioned skills and cognitive processes • recognizes that teachers must be empowered with the knowledge, training, and support to understand the research and implement instruction with fidelity	• The flower model (see previous page) shows reading as a complex and dynamic process of growth, that develops and changes over time. • Roots or Foundational Skills: The roots depict skills essential to reading: word recognition skills, language comprehension skills, and skills that bridge both areas. These skills are not only crucially fundamental; they are interrelated and continue to deepen as the student grows in reading abilities. • Stem: Reading is developmental. Students learn through distinct phases. As students grow in reading skills, their fluency and use of strategies also increase. • Flower: The goal of reading is always to achieve meaning. The flower represents the ultimate product of proficient reading – fluent reading with increased automaticity and comprehension. • Sun: Our reading model includes the instructional design. In scientifically- based reading programs, the pedagogy or method of instruction is highly important. Instruction should promote engagement, focus, motivation, and self-regulation. • Watering Pitcher: In the <i>CRSL Reading Program</i>, instruction is directly connected to real reading and writing.

Phonemic Awareness

IES Recommendation (2016): Develop awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters.

Definition/Major Finding	What Research Tell Us	CR Success Learning's Approach
Phonemic awareness is an understanding that spoken words consist of individual sounds, or phonemes, and that these sounds can be manipulated. <i>“The ability to recognize that words are made up of discrete sounds and that these sounds can be changed is essential to success in learning to read.”</i> (Hoffman, Cunningham, Cunningham, & Yopp, 1998)	Researchers recognize that one must have phonemic awareness in order to read English or any other alphabetic language. Children must be aware of and have a firm grasp of the sounds of the oral language in order to read the written language. This awareness allows them to understand and use the alphabetic principle: <i>Letters represent sounds in words.</i> The National Reading Panel's studies (NRP, 2000) confirmed the importance of phonemic awareness and provided these recommendations: • Provide simple instruction with one or two phonemic awareness skills • Teach how to manipulate phonemes with letters • Develop skills in small groups or whole-class with more intensive small-group follow-up	CRSL closely follows research guidelines. Phonemic Awareness is taught systematically during all levels of the CRSL Literacy programs. Please refer to the attached Scope and Sequence chart. Instruction focuses on those skills that directly relate to reading, spelling, and writing: identifying phonemes, blending phonemes, segmenting phonemes, and manipulating phonemes. Sounds are taught by having students observe mouth movements, which research has proven highly effective (Castiglioni-Spalten & Ehri, 2003). CRSL uses the multisensory Sound Cards to teach sounds through chants, gestures, and visual aids. Students learn to segment sounds with finger pinching and to blend sounds, using One-Breath Blending (continuous blending). Students quickly link the sounds to letters, using the Magnetic Folder.
<i>“Phonemic awareness is what allows us to anchor the sounds in a word to the written sequence of letters that represent those sounds.”</i> (Kilpatrick, 2015)	Advanced phonemic awareness skills, which include automatic phoneme manipulation skills (addition, deletion, and substitution) are essential. Kilpatrick (2015) wrote: “Phonological awareness continues to develop in typical readers beyond first grade even though most programs and assessments discontinue training and assessing phonological awareness at the end of first grade. This later-developing phonemic proficiency significantly impacts reading development.”	In CRSL, the advanced phonemic awareness skills become automatic during two times of the Magnetic Folder Lessons: First, students practice orally identifying the targeted sound and then orally segmenting, blending, and manipulating this sound in syllables and words. Second, students segment, blend and manipulate phonemes as they build a chain of syllables, using the letter tiles. The acronym CH.A.R.T. represents the types of manipulation: Ch – Change or Substitute Sounds (<i>pet to pot</i>) A – Add Sounds (<i>pot to pots</i>) R – Remove or Delete Sounds (<i>spot to pot</i>) T – Twist the Order of Sounds (<i>pot to top</i>)

Phonics

IES Recommendation (2016): Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words.

Definition/Major Finding	What Research Tell Us	CR Success Learning's Approach
Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. <i>Students in the early stage of reading who received explicit phonics instruction performed significantly better on measures of reading achievement than students who received an implicit or embedded approach.</i> (Foorman, Fletcher, Francis, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998) (NRP, 2000), Shannahan (2018) <i>“Teaching students to decode words using systematic and explicit phonics instruction results in improved word-decoding skills (for) monolingual English-speaking students and students whose home language is other than English, as well as students who are having difficulties learning to read.”</i> (Petscher et al., 2020)	Teach students to blend letter sounds and sound–spelling patterns from left to right within a word to produce a recognizable pronunciation (IES, 2016)	In <i>First Steps</i>, students are taught to identify the vowel sound and then use One-Breath Blending (continuous blending) to blend the sounds in words.
	Instruct students in common sound-spelling patterns (IES, 2016). Systematic instruction must be designed appropriately and taught carefully (NICHD, 2000).	In <i>CRSL</i>, students learn a comprehensive approach to decode words, using the predictable patterns of sound-letter correspondences, six syllable types, morphemes, and spelling conventions. The full phonetic code is taught in 25 concepts, which are reinforced by songs, stories, and visual aids. <i>CRSL</i> begins with the most consistent and high-utility consonants and short vowels, and then moves to the more conditional and less frequent spellings. Students learn to categorized frequently-used spellings as Best Spellings.
	Synthetic phonics, which teaches letter-sound correspondences for students to synthesize works better when it includes explicit teaching in blending, morphological teaching, or other more analytic approaches (Shannahan, 2018).	As noted above, <i>CRSL</i> emphasizes continuous blending. Although <i>CRSL</i> would be considered a synthetic phonics program, it includes teaching nine word families (<i>ing, ang, ink, ank, all, old, ost, ind, ild</i>) and morphology (prefixes, suffixes, roots). The meaning of affixes is emphasized.
	“Many researchers have shown strong, significant correlations between spelling ability and reading performance...and have demonstrated the predictive powers of decoding and spelling performance on future reading and spelling abilities” (Weiser & Mathes, 2011).	<i>CRSL</i> integrates spelling and reading throughout the program. Students encode sounds, syllables, words and sentences. <i>Wordsmith</i> directly teaches the most frequent words for writing. In addition, <i>CRSL</i> teaches students how to analyze and remember phonetically irregular words (T.R.I.C.K.y Words).
	“Successful reading at the intermediate grades requires children to have strategies for decoding multisyllabic words” (Cunningham, 2011).	<i>CRSL</i> teaches students systematic strategies (Vowel Tag, Changing, Dividing) to decode multisyllabic words. Students learn how to be flexible with the pronunciation of the vowel sound. Students’ understanding of the Latin structure of <i>prefix + root + suffix</i> assists them in reading and understanding multisyllabic words.

Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Fluency

IES Recommendation (2016): Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge.

IES Recommendation (2016): Ensure that each student reads connected text every day to support reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

Definition/Major Finding	What Research Tell Us	CR Success Learning's Approach
Comprehension: Readers understand that they can make meaning from the words on the page. <i>“Balanced comprehension instruction involves the development of word recognition skills, vocabulary, teaching comprehension strategies, and extensive reading of worthwhile books.”</i> (Pressley, 2002)	Improving the accuracy and/or fluency of word reading positively affects reading comprehension (NRP, 2000).	CRSL recognizes that students must develop both automatic word recognition skills and linguistic comprehension skills. These latter skills include oral language development and emphasize vocabulary, background knowledge, inferential thinking, an understanding of pronoun references and syntax, and sequential thinking. In <i>Jump Start</i> and <i>First Steps</i>, the emphasis is on oral language skills. <i>First Steps</i> teaches narrative elements, the sequential retell of a text, making mental images, and the identification of the main idea. <i>Levels One and Two</i> continue the development of important oral language skills. Transactional strategies are taught with graphic organizers. Students learn to answer literal and inferential comprehension questions, using the 3-H Method (Here questions, Hidden questions, and Head questions). Students are frequently required to write about their reading. Students progress from writing simple sentences, using sentence frames, to composing multiple paragraphs, using CRSL's RResponse Method.
	Background knowledge and vocabulary are critical to comprehension. (Pondiscio, 2014, Catts et al, 2017)	
	Moats (2007) delineated these skills to be taught: “The structure of both narrative and expository text is taught directly. Strategies are overtly modeled and practiced in a planned progression. Subskills such as main idea and theme are also taught and applied.”	
	Strong readers use transactional strategies to comprehend. (Keene and Zimmerman, 1997, 2007). “Engaged readers transact with text and construct understandings based on connections between prior knowledge and new information.” (McLaughlin, 2012)	
	Having students write about the texts they have read enhances comprehension and their reading ability (Graham & Hebert, 2010).	

Spelling – Word Study

Word Study “is an approach to spelling instruction that moves away from a focus on memorization. The approach reflects what researchers have discovered about the alphabetic, pattern, and meaning layers of English orthography.” (Williams, 2009)

Definition/Major Finding	What Research Tell Us	CR Success Learning’s Approach
“<i>Spelling matters because of the role it plays in successful reading and writing.</i>” (ILA 2019) “...research has shown that learning to spell and learning to read rely on much of the same underlying knowledge.” (Moats, 2005) “<i>Teaching spelling according to the principles of Structured Literacy means teaching the structure of language at all levels, including phonology, phoneme-grapheme correspondences, orthographic patterns and constraints, meaningful parts of words (morphology) and their grammatical roles.</i>” (Moats, 2019)	(Spelling) “should reflect words and patterns likely to be used by writers at developmentally appropriate grade levels.” (Gentry, 2004)	Words in <i>Wordsmith</i> are selected based on their frequency of use in reading and writing, by their representation of the phonetic concept, and by their ability to enhance vocabulary and writing skills. In addition, high-frequency non-phonetic words are added. CR Success <i>Wordsmith</i> uses current research to organize the presentation of the words. The research indicates that students should progress from knowing highly reliable sound-spelling correspondence to knowing the more complex orthographic patterns and their exceptions.
	“...successful learning in spelling requires (a) a comprehensive understanding of students’ current knowledge base in spelling, (b) regular and systematic strategy instruction using metalanguage and (c) instruction to be embedded within the context of authentic reading and writing experiences.” (Daffern, 2016)	<i>Wordsmith</i> develops the teacher’s understanding of the student’s knowledge base while providing systematic, explicit, and sequential instruction that uses metalanguage (a clear understanding of how the English language works). Lessons in <i>Wordsmith</i> provide both reading and writing activities; the main goals is always successful, independent reading and writing.
	(Spelling instruction should address) “the three layers of information that are represented in the spelling system of English.” (Templeton 2020) “Effective word study addresses not only spelling but also its integration with word analysis and vocabulary instruction.” (Templeton, 2020)	The <i>Wordsmith</i> program addresses all three layers of language: phonological, orthographic patterns, and morphological. In order to learn these layers, activities in <i>Wordsmith</i> develop visual memory skills, semantic understanding, and etymological knowledge. This program places a major emphasis on word analysis and vocabulary.
	Assessment should be on-going and should provide information that is relevant to instruction. Assessment should not test rote memorization but should test the application of spelling concepts. Assessment should address the nature of spelling difficulties (phonological, sound-symbol knowledge, spelling patterns, and knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and roots. (Moats, 1995)	In <i>Wordsmith</i>, pretest, mid-year, and post-test assessments are administered and then analyzed by spelling patterns and type of spelling errors. Quick Checks and weekly assessments are given as progress monitoring tools. The weekly assessments test at three levels: sound, word, and sentences. The true assessment will be the student’s application of spelling patterns to his or her personal writing. Error correction and feedback focuses on what the student is doing correctly and on the progress the student is making.

Instructional Design

Ardnt (2007) wrote that scientifically-based reading instruction includes these factors in its design:

- explicit and systematic instructional strategies
- coordinated instructional sequences
- ample practice opportunities
- aligned student materials

Teachers nationwide have consistently delivered accelerated gains in reading, when teaching with *CR Success Literacy* program. The unique strengths of the program's instructional design promote this acceleration of learning.

CR Success Learning has a **comprehensive scope and sequence**, based on research and developmental hierarchies of learning. The competencies that are developed in the five different levels are cumulative and build upon each other, from lesson to lesson and from level to level.

Instruction in *CRSL* is **explicit and direct**, using the gradual release model of I Do-We Do-You Do and the use of specific error correction. As the students engage in the dynamic, hands-on lessons, they have **multiple opportunities for purposeful review and practice**. Games, songs, physical movements and visual aids add variety and interest to the lessons.

The Lesson Plan (see page 10) provides **coordinated instructional sequences** that develop the linguistic processes needed for reading.

The *CR Success Readers* are sequentially written, decodable books. These books develop the *CR Success* phonetic concepts in the order they are taught and thus provide **extended practice** in applying the concepts. The books have increasing levels of decodability, as well as increasing levels of language complexity, including word choice and sentence length.

All materials in *CRSL* are **aligned** by the phonetic concepts. This includes the handwriting program (*Home Run Handwriting*), the word study program (*Wordsmith*), and the readers.

The *CRSL* program is structured to promote both skills-based competencies and knowledge-based competencies. *CR Success* recognizes that instruction in reading goes far beyond the ability to simply decode and encode written words. Students need to acquire the necessary conceptual skills, vocabulary and knowledge in order to be proficient readers.

	Step	Targeted Areas	General Outcomes
Board Lesson	1. Purpose	Phonemic awareness (blending, segmenting, manipulating phonemes) Sound-letter associations Phonetic concepts, including six syllable types Morphology Spelling strategies for orthographic patterns	Engagement (interest and motivation) Vocabulary (study of morphemes and their meanings) Academic vocabulary
	2, 3. Spelling and Reading Sounds		
	4. New Concept		
	5, 6. Spelling and Reading Syllables		
	7. Spelling Words		
Book Lesson	8. Reading Words	Ability to decode text at an appropriate rate for fluency	Vocabulary - multiple meanings - pronoun references - meaning in context - figurative language - academic vocabulary
	9. Reading text	Comprehension - predicting - synthesizing and retelling - picturing - asking and answering questions - building connections - determining author's purpose and main idea	Background Knowledge - vocabulary - topic - text structure Self-monitoring Reading stamina
	10. Writing	Writing content (topic, word choice, audience needs, organization) Writing mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization)	

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