

**Research Foundation
Paper**

READ XL[®]

Aligned to
No Child Left Behind



Scholastic READ XL[®]: Informed by Scientifically-Based Research

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Supporting the Struggling Reader

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- Students may become struggling readers due to poverty, difficulties in phonological processing, lack of English-language skills, parents who are not skilled readers, low reading abilities, and/or biological or psychological learning deficits (Lyon, 1998; Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn, 2000).

- Just as the capable reader gains vocabulary and experiences reading as a pleasurable activity, the struggling reader reads less, vocabulary growth is limited, and consequently reading development is inhibited (Walberg et al., 1984; Walberg and Tsai, 1983).
- The lack of practice, deficient decoding skills, and negative experiences make reading a less than rewarding experience (Stanovich, 1986).

- After an extensive review of research related to reading acquisition, the National Reading Panel identified five skill areas to be emphasized in teaching children to read: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

SCHOLASTIC READ XL IMPLEMENTATION

READ XL addresses the needs of students of varying backgrounds and abilities through a multifaceted and comprehensive array of components and instructional practices. The program delivers assessment-driven, standards-aligned instruction that is scaffolded to meet students' needs. It develops essential skills, provides continual guided practice, and includes motivating materials that promote success in reading as well as in other aspects of the school experience.

READ XL has been carefully designed to address the instructional and self-esteem issues of struggling readers. In READ XL, reading success begins with high-interest text that draws students into reading—plus a relevant Real-World Reading Curriculum that appeals to and supports the most reluctant readers.

The motivating content of the READ XL Student Anthology, as well as the high-interest Audiobook and Independent library books, engage students and help them adopt positive attitudes toward reading.

The daily instructional model for READ XL incorporates both scaffolded reading instruction and sustained independent practice, thus promoting reading comprehension and fluency.

READ XL Lesson Plans incorporate direct instruction in comprehension, vocabulary, and word study that include phonics-based instructional activities.

The following pages of this document outline research related to these essential reading skills and indicate some of the ways that READ XL implements the findings.

Phonics

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- Cognitive psychologists have concluded that when a reader’s mental energy is devoted to decoding, there is little room left for comprehending. Once decoding skills improve, the student’s mental energy can be freed up for comprehending (Freedman and Calfee, 1984; LaBerge and Samuels, 1974, cited in Blevins, 1998).

- “Clearly, explicit phonics instruction and reviewing needs to occur for many students in the intermediate grades” (Blevins, 2001).

- Older struggling readers can benefit from decoding skills by improving their word and text comprehension. These skills help struggling readers to “recognize words that are in their oral vocabulary, though not in their sight vocabulary” (Lewkowitz 2000).

SCHOLASTIC READ XL IMPLEMENTATION

The READ XL Teacher’s Guide and Practice Book include phonics-based instructional activities that provide decoding and word identification support for every reading selection.

The READ XL Teacher’s Guide provides word analysis instruction for targeted phonics support and morphology strategies.

READ XL supports decoding and word identification by providing a phonics-based instructional activity for every reading selection.

Fluency

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- Guided, repeated oral reading has a significant positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).
- “Repeated and monitored oral reading improves reading fluency and overall reading achievement” (*Put Reading First*).

- Students can improve their fluency by:
 - 1) hearing models of fluent reading;
 - 2) repeated reading with guidance;
 - 3) combining reading instruction with reading practice at their independent level of reading ability (*Put Reading First*).
- “Fluency develops as a result of many opportunities to practice reading with a high degree of success” (*Put Reading First*).

- “Monitoring and assessing student progress in reading fluency is useful in evaluating instruction and setting instructional goals. It can also be motivating to students” (*Put Reading First*).

SCHOLASTIC READ XL IMPLEMENTATION

The READ XL Teacher’s Guide provides instruction on targeted fluency skills. It also includes fluency activities for teachers to guide students in repeated readings of text.

The READ XL Student Anthology and Shared Reading Novels provide opportunities for teacher read alouds in order to present models of fluent reading.

READ XL Audiobooks present books on tape with a narrator who continuously models fluent reading, phrasing, and expression.

The READ XL Paperback Library provides Lexiled books that present age-appropriate, motivating text that students can read with success. This provides essential reading practice, develops fluency, and builds success, encouraging students to read more.

The READ XL Teacher’s Guide provides strategies for developing students’ fluency and criteria to use for assessment.

READ XL fluency activities target the following goals: correct phrasing, natural and consistent pacing, reading with expression, and monitoring self-correcting difficulties.

Vocabulary

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

- “Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) found that vocabulary instruction providing both definitional and contextual information can significantly improve students' reading comprehension” (Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn, 2000).
- Repetition and multiple exposures to new words are crucial to vocabulary development (National Reading Panel, 2000).
- Direct instruction of vocabulary related to a text leads to better comprehension. Effective direct instruction includes both specific word instruction and instruction in word-learning strategies (*Put Reading First*).
- Students learn most words through everyday experiences with oral and written language, and one of the most important ways of gaining vocabulary is through listening to others read aloud. “Reading aloud to students is particularly helpful when the reader pauses during reading to define an unfamiliar word and, after reading, engages the child in a conversation about the book” (*Put Reading First*).

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In READ XL, essential vocabulary concepts are pre-taught for each Student Anthology selection. These concepts are further developed in context during reading. Additional opportunities for guided and independent practice reinforce learning.

The Student Anthology builds academic language and high-utility vocabulary through selections related to various content areas.

The Practice Book provides skill reinforcement and independent practice of targeted vocabulary for each anthology selection.

Key concept vocabulary is pre-taught in each READ XL lesson, and high-frequency, high-utility vocabulary is presented and defined in context.

Each vocabulary and word study skill is related to several reading selections for repeated instruction and review. Student Anthology selections exemplify vocabulary words in context. A high percentage of the selections are content-area nonfiction.

READ XL Audiobooks include a Reading Coach, who models comprehension, vocabulary, and self-monitoring strategies at key points throughout the book. The Reading Coach “thinks aloud” when he/she encounters unfamiliar words, and models strategies for how to unlock meaning.

Daily instructional time periods provide excellent opportunities for teachers to read aloud to students from the Student Anthology, which provides age- and grade-appropriate text. The READ XL TE directs teachers to discuss vocabulary words, model strategies, and engage in enthusiastic discussions about the text.

Comprehension

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

- “Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. As they read, good readers are purposeful and active” (*Put Reading First*).

- Students can be effectively taught to use comprehension strategies through direct explanation, modeling, guided practice, and application (*Put Reading First*).

- Six strategies have been shown to improve comprehension: monitoring comprehension, using graphic organizers, answering questions, generating questions, recognizing story structure, and summarizing (*Put Reading First*).

SCHOLASTIC READ XL IMPLEMENTATION

The Create Interest feature in the READ XL Teacher’s Guide helps students set a meaningful and motivational purpose for reading by presenting a relevant and thought-provoking question, quotation, writing prompt, or discussion topic prior to reading.

Active reading is taught through the introduction of metacognitive, or self-monitoring, strategies. Ask Yourself questions embedded into the Student Anthology encourage students to use these strategies during reading. In the Teacher’s Guide, these strategies are modeled with “think alouds.”

Mini-Lessons in the Teacher’s Guide present explicit and systematic instruction of targeted comprehension skills and strategies. These lessons offer clear, direct explanation, teacher modeling with “think alouds,” guided practice with graphic organizers, and repeated application opportunities in each reading selection.

Each strategy is connected to at least two reading selections to provide multiple opportunities for instruction, practice, and application. Strategy Transfer activities help students extend that strategy to new contexts. The Practice Book offers independent practice and skill reinforcement.

READ XL presents:

- multiple opportunities to model and practice self-monitoring strategies.
- graphic organizers to organize prior information before reading and to practice comprehension skills and strategies taught in mini-lessons.
- numerous opportunities to ask and answer questions before, during, and after reading, both orally and in writing.
- lesson suggestions to guide students in unlocking text structure and genre.
- regular practice in summarizing during and after reading.

Comprehension, (cont.)

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- In order to make sense of texts, students must have some degree of prior knowledge. Prereading strategies, such as building background, are important in helping students who know little or nothing about a topic (Irvin, 1998).

- “The internal questioning that occurs in the mind of a good reader must be explicated, modeled, and practiced many times in group discussion” (Moats, 2001).

- Many educational theorists believe that the teaching of independent critical thought is central to the learning process (Paul, 1990).

SCHOLASTIC READ XL IMPLEMENTATION

Before reading, students engage in a variety of teacher-guided activities, such as previewing titles, studying accompanying images, and reading introductory copy, pull-quotes, subheads, and captions. In the process, students develop background knowledge and academic vocabulary.

Prior to reading, the teacher helps students identify key concepts for each selection. The class works together to complete graphic organizers that pool and organize prior knowledge and help students build a mental model that promotes comprehension.

Ask Yourself questions embedded in each selection of the Student Anthology offer students multiple models of the internal questioning process, which they can practice together during class reading. The TE offers models for how good readers might answer those questions.

The Reading Coach in the Audiobooks models strategies that good readers use. The coach models “think alouds” and uses self-questioning strategies and self-monitoring strategies to look for context clues and to apply comprehension strategies.

Shared Novels provide further opportunities for students to practice these strategies together.

Connected selections give students practice reading across texts. Students use higher-level thinking skills to analyze information across two selections.

The Wrap-Up section in the Student Anthology offers students an opportunity to respond to connected selections orally and in writing with personal opinions, judgements, conclusions, and generalizations. Students are also encouraged to investigate a variety of real-world applications for their newly acquired knowledge.

Writing and Grammar

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- “I have found that for at-risk students, writing is a far riskier venture than reading” (Allen and Gonzales, 1998).

- The major finding based on classroom experience and 15 years of research shows that student achievement increases when writing is taught as a process rather than as a product (Cotton for NWREL, 1988).

- Effective composition instruction emphasizes the importance of:

- clarity of objectives,
- guided and independent practice,
- alignment with concepts studied

(Cotton for NWREL, 1988).

- “Even as students develop the building blocks for writing, shared and modeled writing helps them transcend the daunting challenges of generating and organizing their thoughts” (Moats, 2001).

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Write About It prompts in the Student Anthology offer students creative and brief assignments, such as writing a new ending to a story, an e-mail or letter, a list of interview questions, or a brief exchange of dialogue.

These assignments are easy to accomplish and, therefore, help reduce the risks associated with writing. They allow students to build writing confidence and fluency as they respond to reading selections.

Students are also encouraged to keep an Academic Journal, in which they write down their own ideas about reading selections.

All formal writing assignments require students to use process writing—a procedure, which includes planning, writing, revising, checking, and publishing, that keeps them actively involved in their own writing and learning.

All writing assignments include clear objectives. Formal assignments specify writing guidelines to explain the elements of the writing genre and writing criteria.

Writing instruction begins with guided practice and graduates to independent work. Write About It activities, Academic Journals, and other writing prompts offer numerous occasions for independent practice.

Writing instruction is aligned to reading skill instruction. For example, when the reading skill is Read for Detail, the writing assignment is Informative Paragraph with Relevant Details.

Assignments focus on short writing pieces with plenty of scaffolding in the form of direct instruction, brainstorming, guided use of prewriting organizers, planning models, and skills support.

Lessons are in a gradual-release format, in which students receive instruction, modeling, and guidance before they begin to work independently.

English-Language Learners

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

- ELL students have cultural differences and academic vocabulary gaps that can impact comprehension. Activating background knowledge is of special importance for them because it helps students to integrate information into existing conceptual frameworks. Effective definitional and contextual academic vocabulary instruction is also crucial (Watts-Taffe and Truscott, 2000).

- Teachers of ELL students should activate and build background knowledge through the use of “pictures, objects, demonstrations, and graphic organizers” (Williams, 2001).

- Multilingual classes should be “language-rich,” providing many opportunities for speaking and listening in a variety of styles, including formal and idiomatic language. It is helpful to establish listening centers for audio support (Beckett and Haley, 2000).

- It is important to recognize and show respect for diversity in the classroom through the incorporation of multicultural literature (Beckett and Haley, 2000).

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Before-reading activities help students build background and construct meaning from text. These activities also support key concepts and concept vocabulary. High utility words are called out and defined on the pages of the Student Anthology. This combination of background and vocabulary support is especially helpful for ELL students because it provides context and helps students develop a conceptual framework.

Visual literacy work before reading and pre-reading graphic organizers help students build a conceptual framework for complex ideas by pooling prior knowledge and organizing newly gained information.

The READ XL classroom presents many opportunities for speaking and listening with the teacher and among peers. In addition, the Reading Support page in the Teacher’s Guide provides specific opportunities for helping the ELL student through the reading selection.

The Audiobooks allow students to follow along in their books as they listen to audiocassette narration that provides a model of fluent reading, pronunciation, and phrasing with a wide variety of age-appropriate texts.

All READ XL student materials reflect a wide range of diversity in peoples and cultures, including historical figures, career role models, authors, and peers, as well as multicultural fictional characters.

Motivation

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- The National Academy of Sciences has identified loss of motivation as one of the three major obstacles some students face when learning to read (Snow, Burns, and Griffin [eds.], 1998).
- Meaningful, higher interest, appropriately leveled texts that engage students provide the required balance to the necessary skill instruction for struggling readers (Braunger and Lewis, 1998).
- One factor that affects motivation is known as attainment value, [i.e., students will not be motivated to read unless they perceive success in reading to be attainable] (Guthrie and Wigfield [eds.], 1997).
- “By the end of the first grade, we begin to notice substantial decreases in the children’s self-esteem, self-concept, and motivation to learn to read if they have not been able to master reading skills and keep up with their age-mates” (Lyon, 1998).
- Matching students to text with the appropriate level of challenge – not too easy or not too hard – is one mechanism for successful reading experiences (Gambrell, Palmer, and Codling, 1993).

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READ XL materials show respect for the older, struggling reader by presenting age-appropriate materials with a below grade-level readability in a high-impact design format. Splashy photos and edgy illustrations give the Student Anthology a contemporary look. Editorial features, such as engaging headlines, introductory copy that teases the reader, and dramatic pull-quotes all create added interest.

The Student Anthology is made up of leveled selections that begin approximately three years below grade level. All selections are scaffolded to support struggling readers with vocabulary and comprehension.

Audiobooks provide struggling readers with an opportunity to follow along as a narrator models fluent reading as well as good comprehension and self-monitoring strategies.

Appropriate text engages interest, promotes fluency, and prevents frustration. However, the accompanying skills are at grade level, which keeps students from drifting further behind. By the end of the anthology, students have progressed developmentally to selections that are on grade level. Moving toward on-level work keeps students from giving up in despair that they can never catch up to their peers.

- The perceived utility value of reading also affects motivation. As in all endeavors, the usefulness of the reading activity influences the investment the reader makes [i.e., when students recognize that one of the benefits of reading includes helping them understand and simply function in the world they live in, their motivation to read increases] (Guthrie and Wigfield [eds.], 1997).

Student Anthology selections represent a variety of genres and topics that are of high interest to students.

The use of real-world documents, such as cartoons, maps, web pages, and more motivate students because the text is relevant and meaningful to their lives.

Real-World Reading activities offer students a way to connect reading skills to a variety of real-life contexts.

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Scholastic Inc.
557 Broadway
New York, NY 10012

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