



SNAPSHOT

BRIDGING RESEARCH
TO PRACTICE

TEACHING
THE CODE.
BUILDING
THE READER.

COMPANION IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

This companion gives teachers a quick way to decide what to do in the moment without losing sight of the larger literacy system. The recommendations synthesize the research and guidance cited throughout the brief. The seven implementation areas translate the article's five-shift framework into practical classroom guidance.

	DO THIS	NOT THIS
1. Word identification <i>Adapted from: Duke (2020), When Young Readers Get Stuck.</i>	• Direct students' attention to the entire written word. • Use known sound-spelling relationships and orthographic patterns. • Encourage blending and word analysis. • Teach students to try another plausible pronunciation when English allows more than one.	• Prompt students to identify an unknown word by looking at the picture. • Ask "What word would make sense?" before the student has attended to print. • Rely on the first letter, syntax, or context as the primary way to identify the word.
2. Comprehension monitoring <i>Adapted from: Duke (2020), When Young Readers Get Stuck.</i>	• After decoding, ask: "Does that sound like a word you know?" • Ask: "Does that make sense in this sentence?" • Prompt students to reread and try another pronunciation when needed. Teach self-correction. • If decoding is accurate but the word is unfamiliar, use a brief explanation, visual, gesture, or context to build meaning and comprehension.	• Prompt students to guess from meaning, context, or pictures before they have decoded the word. • Tell the student the word immediately after an imperfect first attempt. • Accept accurate word calling without checking whether the student understands the word.

	DO THIS	NOT THIS
3. Word meaning and oral language <i>Informed by: Duke (2020) and English Learners Success Forum guidance for multilingual learners.</i>	- Once the student has identified the word from print, attach meaning briefly. - Use student-friendly definitions, gestures, visuals, examples, the surrounding context, cognates, and home-language connections. - Build enough oral language for students to recognize words that decoding approximates.	- Use long lists of practice words students do not understand. - Assume accurate pronunciation means the student knows the word. - Save vocabulary and comprehension for a different instructional block every time.
4. Phonics and flexibility <i>Informed by: Shanahan's work on phonics and flexibility.</i>	- Teach useful patterns explicitly and systematically. - Compare words that follow a pattern with important exceptions. - Invite students to notice alternative pronunciations. - Develop a “try it, check it, adjust it” mindset.	- Teach sound-spelling relationships as if they are absolute rules. - Try to directly teach every possible orthographic pattern. - Keep students in isolated practice because they have not reached perfect mastery. - Treat a reasonable first approximation as failure.
5. Multilingualism <i>Informed by: English Learners Success Forum guidance on multilingual learners, home-language assets, and metalinguistic awareness.</i>	- Identify the knowledge and skills the student's language system already provides. - Compare sounds and spelling patterns across languages. - Use cognates, shared morphology, and metalinguistic conversation. - Distinguish accent variation from a reading difficulty.	- Treat home-language influence as a deficit. - Assume every pronunciation difference indicates weak phonemic awareness. - Give identical additional practice to every multilingual learner. - Correct accent when the actual instructional goal is phonemic awareness or decoding.

	DO THIS	NOT THIS
6. Pacing and application <i>Informed by: Jennerjohn et al. (2026), Bridging the Divide.</i>	• Move regularly from isolated practice to phrases, sentences, connected text, reading, and writing. • Protect connected-text time. • Use formative assessment to decide who actually needs more repetition. • Revisit skills as students encounter them in real reading.	• Repeat routines simply because they are in the lesson. • Wait for perfect mastery before allowing students to read connected text. • Let review consume most of the foundational-skills block. • Equate more minutes of phonics practice with better phonics instruction.
7. Knowledge-building <i>Informed by: Knowledge Matters Scientific Advisory Committee (2023) and English Learners Success Forum.</i>	• Build rich knowledge through read-alouds, science, social studies, discussion, multimedia, connected texts, and writing. • Connect vocabulary and texts in foundational-skills instruction to topics students are already learning when feasible. • Give students something worth reading, talking, and writing about.	• Treat foundational skills as the complete literacy curriculum. • Wait until children are fluent readers before exposing them to complex texts and ideas. • Reduce science and social studies to create ever-longer skills blocks. • Teach disconnected texts and vocabulary simply because they match a phonics pattern.

