Program Overview
Flying Start to Literacy is a specially designed comprehensive early literacy program.

★ The program is the perfect supplement to any core reading program.

★ The program is ideal for early intervention programs, including Tier 2 Response to Intervention, Reading Recovery, Title 1, and Supplemental Services.

★ The program provides effective support for English language learners.

Flying Start to Literacy supports the systematic development of reading strategies and skills in young students. It focuses on the key interrelated elements of beginning reading texts which scaffold early literacy success: key vocabulary, high-frequency words, text complexity, phonics, fluency and comprehension, the links between reading and writing, and assessment for instruction.

Flying Start to Literacy is aligned to the English Language Arts strands of the Common Core State Standards: Reading Standards for Literature, Reading Standards for Informational Texts, Foundational Skills, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.
A summary of the research underpinning *Flying Start to Literacy*

**Research evidence**

*Flying Start to Literacy* is based on research from the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) and the National Reading Panel (2000) in the United States, and several other major books, reports, and research investigations into early literacy teaching.

Significant findings are:

★ **Key vocabulary needs to be controlled and introduced systematically.**
  Helman and Burns, 2008; Hiebert and Sailors, 2009; Mesmer and Cumming, 2009; Mesmer, Cunningham, and Hiebert, 2012.

★ **High-frequency words should have a high rate of repetition.**

★ **A variety of text types enable the development of a range of reading strategies.**

★ **Text complexity should be carefully sequenced to build reading strategies.**

★ **Phonics and phonemic awareness need to be taught systematically and explicitly.**

★ **Fluency enhances comprehension.**
  Pressley, Gaskins, and Fingeret, 2006; Rasinsky, 2006.

★ **Reading and writing are linked.**

★ **Assessment should be ongoing and should inform instruction.**
  Snow and Van Hemel, 2008.
How *Flying Start to Literacy* applies the research findings

**Research finding**

🌟 Key vocabulary needs to be controlled and introduced systematically.

Key vocabulary words are words of high interest in students' personal lives and are words that represent familiar concepts and images. Key vocabulary is made up of familiar verbs, adjectives, and nouns common to students' personal lives. When key vocabulary is controlled, and placed in sentences with a high proportion of high-frequency words, repetition and practice build the reader's confidence, which is particularly important for English language learners. The acquisition of key vocabulary informs students' oral language and literacy development.

**What this means in *Flying Start to Literacy***

🌟 The introduction of key vocabulary is controlled and key vocabulary is constantly revisited.
🌟 The system of connected books presents the same key vocabulary in different sentence structures and contexts.

**Paired books**

- *Hide and Seek*
- *My Birthday*

**Vocabulary Starter**

In the Early Emergent stage, each set of paired books is accompanied by a Vocabulary Starter that introduces the key vocabulary.
Research finding

★ High-frequency words should have a high rate of repetition.

Texts with the following features scaffold reading success, in particular, the reading success of English language learners:

★ Texts with high word repetition rates.

★ Texts with low ratios of unfamiliar words.

These scaffolds will decrease the cognitive load for students learning to speak and read English.

What this means in Flying Start to Literacy

★ Connected, paired books present the same high-frequency words in different sentence structures and text types.

★ There is a high repetition rate of high-frequency words and a low ratio of unfamiliar words.

★ High-frequency words are gradually and systematically introduced and reused.

The high-frequency words in Flying Start to Literacy are those represented by Fry’s 300 Instant Sight Words and are predominantly function words, for example, ‘like,’ ‘was,’ ‘am,’ and ‘the.’ In the book Me there are 21 running words, and the high-frequency words are repeated seven times in the book. In the Early Emergent books the ratio of high-frequency words to total words is 2:3.

All books are paired and address the same concepts, vocabulary, and high-frequency words, but have different sentence structures and text types.
Research finding

A variety of text types enable the development of a range of reading strategies.

Informational texts provide examples of reading and writing for authentic purposes so that students can find information about a topic or learn how to make or construct something. For some readers informational texts may be more engaging than narrative texts.

A range of text types acts as a model for writing for different purposes and with different language features. The more experience students have with reading and learning from informational texts, and the more familiar they are with the purpose and features of informational texts, the more likely they will be effective and efficient readers of this text type in the future.

What this means in Flying Start to Literacy

★ A range of text types with different structures and text features is presented.
★ Key vocabulary and high-frequency words within different text types build reading strategies for texts that have different purposes.

Paired informational and narrative texts contain matching concepts and vocabulary.
Research finding

Text complexity should be carefully sequenced to build reading strategies.

A graded sequence of reading is important for scaffolding learning. Texts can be graded into complexity levels according to vocabulary, sentence structure, meaning or concept-load, conventions of print, or changes in language style, such as an increase in embedded clauses.

What this means in *Flying Start to Literacy*

- *Flying Start to Literacy* is sequenced into 7 Developmental Stages and Guided Reading levels A–P. The levels have been sequenced and field tested in schools.
- Reading strategies are developed and consolidated at each Guided Reading level.

Text complexity and *Flying Start to Literacy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Flying Start to Literacy</em> program stages</th>
<th>Number of books at each stage of <em>Flying Start to Literacy</em></th>
<th>Guided Reading levels</th>
<th><em>Flying Start to Literacy</em> levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Emergent Stage</td>
<td>36 (18 pairs of books) 18 Take-Home books</td>
<td>A–B</td>
<td>1–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Stage</td>
<td>40 (20 pairs of books) 20 Take-Home books</td>
<td>C–D</td>
<td>3–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Stage</td>
<td>24 (12 pairs of books) 12 Take-Home books</td>
<td>E–F</td>
<td>7–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Stage</td>
<td>24 (12 pairs of books) 12 Take-Home books</td>
<td>G–H</td>
<td>11–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Fluent Stage</td>
<td>24 (12 pairs of books) 12 Take-Home books</td>
<td>I–J</td>
<td>15–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent Stage</td>
<td>24 (12 pairs of books) 12 Take-Home books</td>
<td>K–M</td>
<td>19–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent Plus Stage</td>
<td>24 (12 pairs of books) 12 Take-Home books</td>
<td>N–P</td>
<td>25–30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research finding

 Phonics and phonemic awareness need to be taught systematically and explicitly.

A developmental schema for phonics can introduce beginning readers to phonemic awareness sequentially, and enable them to gain a clear understanding of how sounds map to letters.

What this means in *Flying Start to Literacy*

- Phonics is viewed as one of the many important information sources in the reading process.
- Underpinning *Flying Start to Literacy* is a systematic and explicit program of phonemic awareness and phonics.
- The language sequence is matched in the books to provide a context for learning.
- For the developing reader there are many opportunities to use phonic skills and strategies with words that are phonologically accessible without resorting to simplistic decodable books where meaning is jeopardized.

Phonics, high-frequency words, and *Flying Start to Literacy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading stage</th>
<th>Guided Reading level</th>
<th><em>Flying Start to Literacy</em> level</th>
<th>Phonics and high-frequency words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Emergent stage</td>
<td>A–B</td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>• Establishes a full range of concepts about print.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent stage</td>
<td>C–D</td>
<td>3–6</td>
<td>• Introduces common stems and key vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early stage</td>
<td>E–F</td>
<td>7–10</td>
<td>• Introduces phonologically regular vocabulary: all words with short vowels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional stage</td>
<td>G–H</td>
<td>11–14</td>
<td>• Carefully introduces new, phonologically regular vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Fluent stage</td>
<td>I–J</td>
<td>15–18</td>
<td>• Phonologically regular vocabulary includes more complex vowel combinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent stage</td>
<td>K–M</td>
<td>19–24</td>
<td>• Vocabulary includes less common letter combinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent Plus stage</td>
<td>N–P</td>
<td>25–30</td>
<td>• Increased exposure to words with less common phonic representation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Research finding

**Fluency enhances comprehension.**

There are three key elements of reading fluency: accuracy in word decoding, the ability to automatically recognize words, and appropriate use of meaningful oral expression while reading. These three components comprise a gateway to comprehension.

**What this means for Flying Start to Literacy**

★ The ability to recognize words accurately and rapidly, and to group words in meaningful phrases, is emphasized throughout.

★ Many opportunities for oral reading are provided. Lesson Plans include re-reading of books to improve word identification skills and comprehension.

★ Inexpensive Take-Home books provide further opportunities for students to read a familiar text independently. Students should keep these books and build their own home library of familiar texts that they can read and re-read.

Lesson Plan

**Returning to the book**

Provide multiple opportunities for the students to read and interact with the book again – with teacher support, with a partner, and independently. Choose activities that are appropriate for your students.

**Developing fluency**

Ask the students to read the book aloud. Give positive feedback to students who read with fluency. For example: I liked the fluent way that you read – you made sure that you read the punctuation. You paused in the right places so that the listeners could understand the information you were reading to them.

**Returning to the book**

Provide multiple opportunities for the students to read and interact with the book again – with teacher support, with a partner, and independently. Choose activities that are appropriate for your students.

**Developing fluency**

Ask the students to reread the text. Encourage the students to read expressively, with appropriate intonation. Say: Think about how Captain Bill and Captain Pete would talk. Try to make your voice sound this way.
Research finding

Reading and writing are linked.

Writing encourages students to match the spoken word and the written word. In writing, students interact with words and word order in context.

Books offer good models for writing. Analyzing how authors use various qualities of good writing, or the six traits approach (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions), can encourage students to model their stories after the experts (Paquette, 2007). Using different text types, such as recount, procedure, report, narrative, argument, and explanation, encourages students to use these text types in their writing.

What this means in Flying Start to Literacy

★ The presentation of a range of text types and the pairing of informational and narrative books provide models of writing for the reader.

★ Each pair of books is supported by a comprehensive Lesson Plan, which includes writing as an integral part of the lesson.

Lesson Plan

A variety of text types present a range of models for writing.
Research finding

Assessment should be ongoing and should inform instruction.

There is a need for assessment, which has classroom validity, to provide information for instruction. Formative assessment, as opposed to fragmented assessment items, includes the use of Running Records of Reading (Clay 2002) where teachers analyze students’ early reading using forms of miscue analysis or running records of books read by students. The use of valid assessment in literacy has the potential to provide both information for accountability, and to provide information for teaching.

In classrooms with very diverse learners, teachers are constantly checking for students who understand the moment-to-moment activities. Teachers make judgments based on observation, note-taking, questioning, and scaffolding. Teachers observe students’ learning and plan for what the students are ready to learn.

What this means in Flying Start to Literacy

- Ongoing assessment forms part of the teaching sequence.
- Each Lesson Plan identifies a reading strategy as a focus for an individual book and provides monitoring points to alert the teacher to observe how each student is using the selected strategy.
- A full range of reading strategies for each developmental stage is covered.
- Assessment checklists are available with the program.

Lesson Plan
In conclusion, according to Sailors, Hoffman, and Condon (2009), the framework of well-designed, appropriately leveled texts is characterized by three major factors:

★ instructional design
★ engaging qualities
★ accessibility.

Instructional design programs for beginning readers provide repeated exposure to high-frequency words, which leads to ease of word recognition. Another underlying instructional design principle is repeated exposure to common word families, such as *ay* and *ook*, that build developmentally from common letter–sound relationships to the less common, less regular, and more complex letter–sound relationships.

Engaging qualities include the content, the language, and the design. The content stimulates the reader to think about issues and may also evoke strong emotion. The language needs to be clear and the vocabulary appropriate, and, where possible, easy and fun to read aloud. According to Sailors, Hoffman, and Condon (2009), the design of the text needs to be aesthetically pleasing in terms of layout, format, and the use of line, color, shape, and texture. The design extends and supports the reader to comprehend the story or the information in the book.

The accessibility of the text is tied to three factors: ability to decode, predictability, and format. Although many of the words may be decodable and predictable, there needs to be an element of challenge and engagement when meeting familiar words in a new context. Well-designed leveled texts should be highly engaging, highly accessible, as well as high in instructional design.

The framework of *Flying Start to Literacy* has been developed to meet all the foregoing criteria related to instructional design, engaging qualities, and accessibility, and to maximize the learning experience of beginning readers in highly motivating contexts.

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