Continued Progress with Reading

By:
Jennifer Lark
Julie Pietrangelo
Leah Schuster
Three issues that were taken into consideration during the creation of CPR (Continued Progress with Reading) were the relationship between literacy skills and general success in life, the effectiveness of current reading instruction, and students’ reading achievement in school. Research from Educational CyberPlayground (2004) reports a lack of proficient readers in all grades of school. There is also a correlation between literacy skills and prison inmates, welfare recipients, and general personal economics. A definite link exists between reading ability and members of society who lead productive lives.

According to the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), “in 1992, with the exception of persons without a high school diploma or GED, annual earnings rose continuously across the literacy levels” (National Institute for Literacy, 2000, p. 6). Statistics suggest that people who read at a higher level earn more money. People with lower literacy levels (levels 1 and 2) earn significantly less than those with higher literacy levels (levels 3 and 4). According to the NIFL website, the mean annual earnings of the employed population with a high school diploma were:

- $14,570 at literacy level 1
- $15,880 at literacy level 2
- $17,530 at literacy level 3
- $19,300 at literacy level 4

The mean annual earnings of the employed population with some post-secondary education were:

- $17,120 at literacy level 1
- $17,580 at literacy level 2
- $19,670 at literacy level 3
- $21,110 at literacy level 4
Because of higher literacy levels equal higher pay, literacy skills should be at least monetarily valuable, if not personally satisfying or important. CPR offers students the opportunity to raise their literacy level.

There is also a concern regarding the relationship between literacy levels and prisoners. Undernews (an online report of the Progressive Reviews) state that “More than a third of convicts released from Texas prisons in 2002 were functionally illiterate, and half of those could not read, significantly reducing their chances of success as law-abiding citizens…” (Ward, 2004, p.1). The NIFL supports the Undernews findings, and report that “In 1992, about one in three prison inmates performed at reading level 1 on the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) compared to one in five of the household population also reading at the same level” (National Institute for Literacy, 2000, p. 5). An even greater difference is evident between inmates and the general population at reading level 4. “About six percent of prisoners compared with seventeen percent of the household population function at a high level 4 reading ability” (National Institute for Literacy, 2000, p. 5). There appears to be a correlation between low-reading levels and prison inmates.

In addition to the comparatively low reading levels present in the prison population, low scores also occur among welfare recipients (National Institute for Literacy, 2000). According to the NALS:

- 31% of women on welfare read at a level 1 compared to 13% of women who were not on welfare.
- 37% of women on welfare were reading at a basic level (reading level 2), compared to 25% of women who were not on welfare.
Because research shows that prisons, welfare, and annual incomes are correlated to reading skill, the need for focused reading-instruction programs becomes clear.

According to the Educational CyberPlayground website, the problem is the effectiveness of reading instruction. Statistics show that “Fifty percent of all Americans over sixty-five years old are functionally illiterate, sixty percent of urban school children do not graduate from high school, and forty percent of those who do read, read only at a fourth-grade level” (Educational CyberPlayground, 2004, p. 1). According to Nina Shokrai Rees in the article “Improving Education for Every Child” (2004, p.2), “Roughly one-third of all incoming college students enroll in a remedial reading or writing class.” As far as students achieving appropriate reading levels, the 2003 Nation’s Report Card reports that sixty-eight percent of the nation’s fourth graders are reading below proficiency. Sixty-four percent of twelfth graders are also reading below proficiency” (Educational CyperPlayground, 2004, p. 2). Clearly, the statistics look bleak, but they certainly illustrate a need for improved reading instruction.

The need for successful reading instruction is urgent as school systems are faced with higher standards. In the state of Ohio, the Ohio Department of Education has set a goal for all students in Ohio to be proficient readers (Ohio Department of Education, 2005). According to the Office of Reading Improvement, proficiency is achieved by providing support for local literacy education and ensuring that all students receive high-quality reading instruction in the classroom. The Office also advocates high-quality reading support during tutoring and other interventions (2005). Despite the efforts of school districts throughout Ohio, many students are not performing at the reading levels they should be. Clearly programs for reading instruction need to be implemented; especially programs targeting low-ability students at the middle school level.
The semester-long course is targeted for incoming eighth-grade students who do not successfully pass the Ohio Eighth Grade Reading Achievement Test, as well as any ninth-grader who needs extra reading instruction as determined by the student’s teacher. The course is devoted to improving reading comprehension among students with inadequate reading skills. CPR focuses on teaching students different reading strategies that will improve their reading comprehension and increase their school success. Knowledge gained in CPR can be applied to all content-area classes as well as standardized tests.

The goals set for the class are achieved through a series of twelve specific strategies used throughout a seventeen-week semester. Each week focuses on a specific reading strategy. The week is structured as follows: Monday – English, Tuesday – Science, Wednesday – Social Studies, Thursday – Math, and Friday – the Arts. By having one day a week devoted to a particular subject, the student can apply the week’s strategy in different ways. The goal is to have the student internalize the strategy, thereby increasing reading comprehension.
Annotated Bibliography


The author identifies that there is a crisis in the United States affecting every age group in the United States. Unfortunately, a growing number of citizens are considered functionally literate. Besides addressing startling statistics about literacy, the website also ventures out to talk about possible causes or consequences of our educational systems of societal systems. Other topics focused on are literacy, history of reading, evolution of reading, and much more.


The NIFL Literacy Facts Sheets include facts and statistics from more than fifty research studies. Links to digests of some of the major studies are also included on the website. Facts are organized by the major topic areas in the field of literacy. Major topic areas include correctional education facts, family environment and family literacy, literacy and health, reading facts, parental involvement in learning, and welfare and literacy.


The Office of Reading Improvement is focused on continuing Ohio’s trend of improving school reading achievement by supporting schools in the areas they need it most. The office goal is for all Ohio students to be proficient readers. The goal will be achieved by supporting local literacy education and ensuring that all students receive high quality reading instruction in the classroom, support during tutoring and intervention and prevention programs, and interaction around literacy away from school.


The information reported in Undernews, an online journal, states that illiteracy is quite high among convicts in the year 2002. The article reported on a study that found that more than a third of convicts released from Texas prisons in 2002 were functionally illiterate.
GENERAL
ILOs
General ILOs for Continued Progress with Reading (CPR)

1. To enable students to acquire vocabulary through exposure to language-rich situations. (Cognition)

2. To enable students to develop and learn to apply strategies, such as predicting and recalling that help them to comprehend and interpret informational and literacy texts. (Cognitive Skill).

3. To enable students to gain information from reading for purposes of learning about a subject, doing a job, making decisions and accomplishing a task. (Cognition and Cognitive Skill).

4. To enable students to apply the reading process to various types of informational texts, including essays, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, instruction manuals, consumer and workplace documents, reference materials, multimedia and electronic resources. (Cognitive Skill and Psychomotor Perceptive)
SUB-UNIT
OUTCOMES
Sub-Unit Intended Learning Outcomes

1. To enable students to acquire vocabulary through exposure to language-rich situations.

The students will:
   a. Define unknown words through context clues and the author’s use of comparison, contrast and cause and effort.
   b. Analyze the relationships of pairs of words in analogical statements and infer word meanings from these relationships.
   c. Infer the literal and figurative meaning of words and phrases and discuss the function of figurative language, including metaphors, similes, idioms, and puns.
   d. Use knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots, prefixes and suffixes to understand complex words and new subject-area vocabulary.
   e. Determine the meanings and pronunciations of unknown words by using dictionaries, thesauruses, glossaries, technology and textual features, such as definitional footnotes or sidebars.

2. To enable students to develop and learn to apply strategies, such as predicting and recalling that help them to comprehend and interpret informational and literary texts.

The students will:
   a. Apply reading comprehension strategies, including making predictions, comparing and contrasting, recalling and summarizing and making inferences and drawing conclusions.
   b. Answer literal, inferential, evaluative and synthesizing questions to demonstrate comprehension of grade appropriate print texts and electronic and visual media.
   c. Monitor own comprehension by adjusting speed to fit the purpose, or by skimming, scanning, reading on, looking back, and note taking or summarizing what has been read so far in text.

3. To enable students to gain information from reading for purposes of learning about a subject, doing a job, making decisions and accomplishing a task.

The students will:
   a. Identify and understand organizational patterns and techniques, including repetition of ideas, syntax and word choice, that authors use to accomplish their purposes and reach their intended audience.
   b. Critique the treatment, scope and organization of ideas from multiple sources on the same topic.
   c. Analyze an author’s implicit and explicit argument, perspective or viewpoint in text.
   d. Analyze the author’s development of key points to support argument or point of view.
   e. Identify the features of rhetorical devices used in common types of public documents, including newspaper editorials and speeches.
4. To enable students to apply the reading process to various types of informational texts, including essays, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, instruction manuals, consumer and workplace documents, reference materials, multimedia and electronic resources.

The students will:
   a. Evaluate the point of view used in a literary text.
   b. Analyze how an author’s choice of genre affects the expression of a theme.
   c. Define and identify types of irony, including verbal, situational and dramatic, used in literary texts.
   d. Analyze ways in which the author conveys mood and tone through word choice, figurative language and syntax.
   e. Explain how authors use symbols to create broader meanings.
Sequence Rationale

Continued Progress with Reading (CPR) is designed to help students increase their literacy skills. The students practice reading in the class on a daily basis. Although reading is a large part of the class, another focus is the reading strategy. Each week, students practice reading by using a specific reading strategy. The goal is for students to internalize the strategies, thereby increasing their reading skills. The teaching of the strategies does not necessarily depend on a sequence, because the strategies are simply ways for students to master reading. However, there are certain steps to follow in order to help build the reading skills.

The first step in helping students improve their reading skills is to focus on the skill that most students seem to find difficult to master. Reading long passages of nonfiction work challenges many students. Passages from achievement tests are typically nonfiction and are also quite lengthy. Therefore, students enrolled in the course are better off gaining confidence in reading by first building skills in nonfiction literature. Aside from reading practice, students also practice writing short and extended responses based on the reading passages. The short and extended responses are required on achievement tests.

Once student have increased their skills in the nonfiction category, the second step is to move on to works of fiction. On achievement tests, the fiction pieces are usually brief stories or poems. Students usually do not have to focus so much of their energy on getting through the fiction passages. Midway through the course, students also sharpen their skills in short and extended responses. Students use the multiple strategies mastered throughout the course to complete short and extended responses.

After a student has demonstrated increased skill in reading fiction and written responses, the final six weeks of the course again focuses on nonfiction. The extra practice with reading
strategies in nonfiction helps the student to further internalize the reading strategies.

Additionally, the students leave the class having more exposure to nonfiction.
EVALUATION PLAN
Evaluation Plan

A variety of evaluation strategies are used to effectively determine the value of CPR. Students must be evaluated in the areas of course content. Course success is determined by student achievement on the OGT.

Informal evaluation of the course occurs on a regular basis and students are encouraged to reflect on their own progress. Teachers must assure that alignment with state standards occur at the appropriate pace and time. Teaching strategies are evaluated as each lesson is taught. The range of assessments, focusing on data and observation, offers a routine determination of the strengths and weaknesses of the course. Personal reflection is a necessity in evaluating the scope and sequence of the course content. Fluctuation for the course is based on current reading scores on the eighth-grade Achievement Test and the Ohio Graduation Test if given to sophomores. The course is driven on the outcome of student performance on the reading portion of the state-mandated assessments.

Student success in CPR is measured by both formative and summative evaluation. Daily exercises, weekly quizzes, and unit tests are the main formative assessment tools used to determine the students’ understanding of the course content. Reading strategies gained from the course give students the tools to successfully pass the reading portion of the Ohio Graduation Test. The OGT functions as the summative evaluation for the course.

Continued reflection on the purpose of the course, as well as any adoptions or changes, depends once again, on the passage rate of the eighth-grade Achievement Test in reading, as well as the sophomore passage rate on the OGT in reading. Through evaluation of the eighth-grade Achievement Test and the OGT, the board has continued justification for adding or removing sections of CPR based on appropriate statistical data over a five-year span.