

## Right to Read Inquiry Report and Readtopia™

Decades of research shows us what we need to do to give all students equal opportunity to learn to read, but this knowledge has not translated into classroom practice. The **Right to Read Inquiry Report** calls for significant and important changes to the approach to early reading instruction in Ontario. The recommendations from this report have important implications affecting ALL students' right to learn to read.

**Readtopia™** is a comprehensive instructional program developed for students with moderate to severe learning challenges. **Readtopia™** employs evidence-based approaches to teach literacy as part of integrated curriculum units that are rooted in engaging and meaningful social studies and science topics. Explicit instruction, opportunities for repetition with variety and scaffolded materials support learners who require Tier 2 and Tier 3 literacy instruction.

In the table below, highlights from the *Right to Read Inquiry Report* are aligned with the components found in Readtopia and the evidence-base supporting the instruction of literacy at the emergent to early conventional levels.

### INTRODUCTION: Focusing on early reading

From the Right to Read Report	Alignment to Readtopia	Evidence Base
<p><i>“A comprehensive approach to early literacy recognizes that instruction that focuses on word-reading skills, oral language development, vocabulary and knowledge development, and writing are all important components of literacy.” (p. 9)</i></p> <p><i>“Explicit, evidence-based instruction in building background and vocabulary knowledge, and in reading comprehension strategies, are all parts of comprehensive literacy instruction.” (p. 9)</i></p>	<p><b>Vocabulary Instruction</b> Includes principles of effective, evidence-based vocabulary instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combines explicit instruction of words that are specific to the texts students will read while also focusing on words that students are most likely to encounter across contexts</li> <li>• Provides instruction in word definitions and exposure to these words repeatedly across multiple contexts</li> <li>• Intentional selection and use of core vocabularies in videos, phonics, word study, reading, writing, speaking and listening activities</li> <li>• Increases students’ reading and writing fluency</li> <li>• Expands world knowledge</li> <li>• Improves reading comprehension</li> <li>• Develops speaking and listening skills</li> <li>• Supports learning across subject areas.</li> </ul>	<p>By understanding words and their connections to concepts and facts, students develop skills that eventually help them comprehend text (<i>Kamil &amp; Hiebert, 2005; Neuman &amp; Dwyer, 2009</i>).</p> <p>The evidence-base regarding vocabulary instruction suggests that effective vocabulary instruction:</p> <p>(a) includes direct instruction of vocabulary words specific to the texts we want students to read (<i>Anderson &amp; Nagy, 1991</i>);</p> <p>(b) provides students with repeated opportunities to encounter words in a variety of contexts (<i>Stahl, 2005</i>);</p> <p>(c) focuses on the words students are most likely to encounter across texts and contexts (<i>Beck, McKeown, &amp; Kucan, 2002</i>);</p> <p>(d) helps students understand the word’s definition and how the word functions in different contexts (<i>Nash &amp; Snowling, 2006; Stahl &amp; Kapinus, 2001</i>); and</p> <p>(e) integrates a variety of approaches (<i>National Institute Child Health and Development, 2000</i>).</p>

<p><i>"The goal of reading is to understand and make meaning from what is read. The evidence is clear that good reading comprehension requires being able to read words accurately and quickly, or automatically. It also requires good oral language comprehension, including strong vocabulary and background knowledge"</i></p>	<p><b>Building Background Knowledge: Videos Lessons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively engage students in a whole group lesson to build world knowledge</li> <li>• Help to create accurate mental models to support reading comprehension.</li> <li>• Provide students with an independent means of learning new information related to academic content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Videos serve an important role in building background knowledge, teaching vocabulary, and providing critical multimedia content delivery that supports learning for students with disabilities (Vaughn, Roberts, Swanson, Fall, &amp; Stillman-Spisak, 2014).</li> <li>• Background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge are often diminished among students with disabilities (Shanahan &amp; Shanahan, 2008).</li> <li>• Video provides educators with an important means of addressing background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge while controlling every moment of the instruction (Mayer, 2011)</li> </ul>
<p><i>"Vocabulary and background knowledge, the ability to understand spoken language, and the use of reading comprehension strategies are all also critical aspects of reading development. Indeed, the National Reading Panel found critical roles for instruction in each of the Five Big Ideas in Beginning Reading -phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension." (p. 29)</i></p>	<p><b>Comprehension Instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole group Anchor-Read-Apply instructional approach to Guided Reading</li> <li>• Teaches students how to comprehend text</li> <li>• Each lesson models and teaches a single comprehension strategy</li> <li>• Strategies are repeated across multiple units to provide ongoing distributed learning opportunities</li> <li>• Lesson design and repetition of comprehension strategies across thematic units helps students develop effective comprehension strategies</li> <li>• Close reading of information text develops students' skills in comprehending 10 common text types</li> </ul>	<p>In general, reading comprehension is improved when students are engaged in curriculum that provides ongoing opportunities for engagement and interaction regarding text (Trabasso &amp; Bouchard, 2002).</p> <p>Consistent with the evidence-based findings in Guthrie and Davis (2003) effective comprehension instruction involves:</p> <p>(a) the purposes for reading each chapter are interesting content goals that are systematically related to concrete experiences and prior knowledge for each student;</p> <p>(b) students are encouraged to engage socially with one another related to the text and the specific purposes for reading;</p> <p>(c) the texts are interesting and written using considerate text that addresses the language and learning needs of older, struggling readers. Current research on teaching students with significant disabilities to comprehend text focuses primarily on key ideas and details, or surface level memory of the text (Mims, Browder, Baker, Lee, &amp; Spooner, 2009; Mims, Hudson, &amp; Browder, 2012).</p> <p>(d) In close reading, students are taught to examine a text carefully and critically, which usually involves repeated reading for different purposes (Fisher &amp; Frey, 2012).</p> <p>(e) Through close reading, students can acquire important background knowledge as they study and work to remember the information in the text (Cervetti, Jaynes, &amp; Hiebert, 2009).</p>

*“Evidence-based direct, explicit instruction for spelling and writing are also important to literacy. Many students, including students with reading disabilities, have difficulties with written expression.” (p. 9)*

### Writing

- In Readtopia, shared writing instruction includes activities that ask students to write in response to shared reading and viewing tasks.
- Students must be provided with opportunities to identify their own topics and purposes, write about those topics and achieve purposes using letters and words (not symbols), share their writing with others, and revise their writing independently and/or after feedback from adults and peers.

### Predictable Chart Writing

- Lessons provide students with opportunities to participate in structured, systematic shared writing activities that develop:
- Print conventions (capitalization, punctuation, first/last words in a sentence, etc.)
- Concepts of print (read from top to bottom, left to right, etc.)
- Alphabet knowledge (letter names and sounds)
- Concept of a word (first and last letter of a word, space between and around words, etc.)
- Development of high frequency (core) vocabulary used to read, write and communicate

- Emergent writing contributes to understandings of letters and phonemes and eventual reading achievement (*Bloodgood, 1999; Dickinson et al., 2003; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Ukrainetz et al., 2000*).
- Writing is also critical for independent and autonomous communication for students with significant disabilities that include complex communication needs (*Barker, Saunders, & Brady, 2012; Erickson, 2017*).
- If writing is going to have maximal impact on literacy and communication for students with the most significant disabilities, it must help students learn to translate thought into text (*van Kraayenoord et al, 2014*).
- Predictable chart writing increases engagement because the content is personalized to their interests and experiences; writing becomes understood as a means of representing interests and ideas (*Erickson and Koppenhaver, 2020*).

## CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION: Key findings and recommendations:

From the Right to Read Report	Alignment to Readtopia	Evidence Base
<p><i>“The goal of reading is to understand and make meaning from what is read. The evidence is clear that good reading comprehension requires being able to read words accurately and quickly, or automatically. It also requires good oral language comprehension, including strong vocabulary and background knowledge” (p. 24)</i></p> <p><i>“Science-based curriculum and classroom instruction are the foundation for meeting the right to read.” (p. 27)</i></p> <p><i>“The goal of reading is to understand and make meaning from the text. The evidence is clear that one essential component of good reading comprehension is the ability to decode or read words quickly and efficiently.” (p. 28)</i></p> <p><i>“Learning to decode our alphabetic system requires knowing letter-sound relationships (grapheme-phoneme correspondences) and being able to apply that knowledge to blend the individual sounds together to successfully identify written words (decoding).” (p. 29)</i></p> <p><i>“The best way for students to gain word-reading skills, beginning in Kindergarten, is with explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and word-level decoding, learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences and how to use these to decode words, including blending sounds and segmenting words into sounds to read words and segmenting words into sounds to write words.</i></p>	<p>Students with multiple levels of complex instructional needs, who all reside in a single classroom, require differentiated alphabetic principle and/or phonics instruction. Readtopia provides teachers with the ability to easily differentiate instruction by choosing from Learning Letters, Making Words and Word Study lessons.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Alphabet Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Letters is an explicit approach to alphabet instruction for Emergent level students.</li> <li>• Lessons use an adapted Enhanced Alphabetic Knowledge routine developed by Jones and colleagues (2013), which include strategies by Erickson and Koppenhaver (2019).</li> <li>• Explicit and effective instruction of letter names, shapes, and sounds also focus on the application and use of alphabetic knowledge.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Phonics Instruction with Making Words</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Words lessons address the needs of Transitional level students.</li> <li>• Lessons are based on the work of Dr. Patricia Cunningham, modified to address the needs of students with significant disabilities.</li> <li>• Focus on decoding single-syllable words.</li> <li>• Students learn to read and spell single syllable words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alphabet knowledge is a strong predictor of later reading success in young children without disabilities (<i>Hammill, 2004; NIFL, 2009; Storch &amp; Whitehurst, 2001</i>).</li> <li>• Alphabet knowledge is also strongly related to word and nonword reading as well as later reading comprehension for students with significant disabilities (<i>Sermier Dessemontet &amp; de Chambrier, 2015</i>).</li> <li>• When alphabet knowledge is taught and immediately applied in the context of comprehensive, shared and independent reading and writing that extends over a period of months and years, students with significant disabilities can develop alphabet knowledge and apply it meaningfully to reading and spelling (<i>e.g., Allor et al, 2010; Fallon et al, 2004; Johnston et al, 2009; Koppenhaver &amp; Erickson, 2003</i>)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention to these letter-sound relationships allows readers to decode unknown words, master unfamiliar spelling patterns, and become a more fluent reader (<i>Mesmer &amp; Griffith, 2005</i>).</li> <li>• Being able to successfully decode words in text supports the development of the ability to read words with automaticity and accuracy, which supports comprehension (<i>Ehri, 2005</i>).</li> <li>• In a spelling-based approach to phonics, students are taught to manipulate individual letters to make words that differ from one another by just one or two letters or use the same letters organized in different ways (<i>Beck &amp; Beck, 2013; Cunningham, 2016; Stahl, Duffy-Hester, &amp; Stahl, 1998</i>).</li> </ul>

<p><i>Explicit instruction includes more advanced skills as children progress, such as studying word structure and patterns (for example prefixes, word roots, suffixes). This explicit, systematic approach based on reading science is also referred to as structured literacy.” (p. 29)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Word Study Lessons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessons designed to further students’ ability to decode fluently and to stimulate language curiosity</li> <li>• Begin to see the meaningful chunks in words</li> <li>• Learn to add prefixes and suffixes to root words</li> <li>• Make compound words</li> <li>• Learn to generalize and apply effective strategies when approaching unknown and more difficult words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As words become more complex, the ability to process orthographic units at the morpheme level positively impacts decoding and comprehension of words with multiple syllables (<i>Goodwin &amp; Ahn, 2010; Nagy, Beringer &amp; Abbot, 2006; Wolter &amp; Green, 2013</i>).</li> <li>• Meta-analyses provide evidence that targeted morphological interventions can result in significant literacy gains for school-age children, particularly for those with speech, language and literacy challenges (<i>Bowers, Kirby, &amp; Deacon, 2010; Goodwin &amp; Ahn, 2010, 2013; Reed, 2008; Wolter &amp; Green, 2013</i>).</li> <li>• Strong mental graphemic representations are important to support the development of reading fluency and, therefore, comprehension. Furthermore, strong mental graphemic representations allow readers to identify unfamiliar words by analogy with stored mental graphemic representations from other words (<i>Goodwin &amp; Ahn, 2010</i>).</li> </ul>
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## READING INTERVENTIONS:

Specific Recommendations Regarding Tier 2 and Tier 3 Reading Interventions:

- *“To increase and standardize access, the OHRC recommends school boards make sure every school has at least one evidence-based tier 2 and tier 3 (more intensive than tier 2) reading intervention for students in each grade who need them [Recommendation 73]. This will require additional stable, enveloped yearly funding and implementation support from the Ministry Recommendations 68, 80 and 83] and adequate professional development and support to make sure there are knowledgeable and skilled educators who can deliver these interventions [Recommendations 83 to 85]” (p. 43)*
- *“Tier 2 should be implemented with small groups of students, with sufficient time and intensity. Later interventions should also focus on more advanced word-reading skills (including more advanced orthographic patterns, syllables and morphemes) and strategies. Tier 3 should either use approaches that incorporate more intensive use of tier 2 intervention programs, or more specialized programs.” (P. 45)*
- *“Tier 3 should include more explicit instruction and scaffolded practice, enough cumulative review to ensure mastery of the skills, and more time in the intervention.” (p. 45)*

**All of the recommendations in the *Right to Read Inquiry Report* relate to Tier 1, 2 and 3 reading interventions. Readtopia addresses the recommendations specifically for students who require Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction.**

## Helpful Links

**Right to Read Inquiry Report:** [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report)

**Readtopia™** [www.bridges-canada.com/products/readtopia-curriculum](http://www.bridges-canada.com/products/readtopia-curriculum)

**Bridges Professional Learning:** [www.bridges-canada.com/pages/professional-learning](http://www.bridges-canada.com/pages/professional-learning)

**Building Wings:** (developer of Readtopia™) [buildingwings.com](http://buildingwings.com)

**Bridges Canada:** (exclusive authorized trainer and distributor for Readtopia™) [www.bridges-canada.com](http://www.bridges-canada.com)