catching readers grade 3

DAY-BY-DAY SMALL-GROUP READING INTERVENTIONS

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Teaching Resources on the DVD

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Now, it’s time to look at the daily routine of the EIR lessons, the rationale behind them, and some basic getting started information. But first, let’s review a few foundational ideas:

- With EIR, students’ reading progress is accelerated because your instruction is based on the same effective reading instruction you use with all students—this is not about remediation.
- Students who are struggling with reading are given an extra shot of quality, small-group reading instruction. These children are getting this support in addition to, not instead of, other whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one attention.
Engaging children’s books are selected for the lessons (see the sample book list in Table 3-1 on page 32 and on the DVD to guide you).

Third graders who need continued support in word-attack strategies for multisyllabic words are given the help they need. Additionally, many children who had a slow start in learning to read in first and second grade need to work on their reading fluency. Many also need to work on their reading comprehension. With the grade 3 EIR strategies, all of these things are covered. Although comprehension is not neglected, the focus for the first half of the year is on refining students’ word-recognition strategies and their fluency. In the second half of the year, the focus shifts to improving reading comprehension while maintaining students’ word-recognition accuracy and reading fluency.

Getting Started: FAQs

In Chapter 5 you will find more information about how to determine which children might benefit from EIR. For now, here are some questions teachers commonly ask about setting up the groups.

How many students are in a group?

Each group should have about five to seven students, seven being the maximum. If there are more than seven children in your room who need EIR lessons, I would recommend finding a way to have two groups instead of just one. If you have Title 1 at your school, perhaps the Title 1 teacher can work with one group and you can work with the other. Then you can periodically switch groups so you have a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of all your struggling readers.

Who should teach the EIR students?

As hard as it is to teach two EIR groups, should you find you need to do this, I cannot recommend that one of the groups be taught by an instructional aide. Children at risk of reading failure desperately need quality, supplemental reading instruction, which is in addition to instruction from the regular reading program, and which is provided by certified teachers.

What advice do you have in regard to English Language Learners and EIR?

Often the question comes up as how to handle English language learners (ELLs) and fall placement in EIR. I would put the ELLs in an EIR group in the fall unless they have the opportunity to learn to read in their first language. I have found that ELLs generally do well in EIR (Taylor 2001).
How do students in special education fare with EIR?
I have also found that EIR works well with students who have learning disabilities. No modifications to the program are recommended.

However, students who are developmentally and cognitively delayed learn well in EIR, but easier texts are typically needed than those used in regular EIR lessons to keep the children feeling successful.

Do the children in EIR groups feel stigmatized?
Over the many years I’ve been implementing and researching EIR, teachers report that children do not feel stigmatized. In fact, children love the fast pace, interesting texts, and feelings of success that they experience in EIR lessons. Children who no longer need the program often do not want to give the group up. All children are in small groups with their teacher, so no one seems to think much about who is with the teacher when. But the children in EIR lessons like the extra time with their teacher if she is the one teaching the EIR group.

What’s the optimum time of the year to start EIR?
It is best to begin EIR in October. However, if you have just bought or been given this book and it is February, then for you, February would be the best time to begin. (It’s just not a good idea to start any later in the year than March.)

What’s the best way for me to begin to build my confidence with EIR?
After you read through the five-day procedures in Figure 3-1, read the Day 1 procedures again and watch the corresponding Day 1 video clips on the accompanying DVD. Soon, the EIR routines will seem very natural, and, as many teachers have reported, you will feel that the extra work on your part is worth the effort! For the past 15 years, I have consistently found that teachers, by February, are very excited about the progress they see their struggling third-grade readers making.

How do I know when I am ready to actually teach the lessons?
Once you have read this book, you may not feel completely ready to conduct the lessons, but I have found the best way to learn about EIR procedures is to just jump in and try them. If you have questions, and I’m sure you will, you can reread parts of the book or rewatch particular video clips. Ideally, you will be working with a group of colleagues learning and implementing EIR together so that you can share successes and discuss questions and uncertainties together.
Grade 3 Basic EIR Procedures

DAY 1 LESSON
1. The teacher and the students read a book they have not read before. The teacher models and assists in decoding multisyllabic words as students are reading. The teacher and students discuss word meanings in context.

2. The teacher coaches for comprehension on questions that engage students in high-level thinking.


DAY 2 LESSON
1. The teacher coaches for comprehension.

2. The teacher and the students complete a group sheet on summarizing a narrative story (see Figure 3-5) or answer written questions on an informational book (see Figure 3-6 for examples).

3. The children practice rereading their book as the teacher coaches individuals in word recognition, providing help with multisyllabic words.

4. The teacher explains how to use the individual take-home sheet (see Figure 3-7), which prepares students for working with their first-grade partner (or EIR partner).

DAY 3 LESSON
1. The teacher gives students feedback on the take-home sheet. You should have students complete this sheet on Day 3 if it is not sent home.

2. Students practice reading the EIR first-grade book (if available) so they are sure they can successfully coach their first-grade partner.

3. The teacher and students discuss strategies for coaching first graders.

4. Students practice reading their grade 3 EIR book if they indicate on their take-home sheet that they need more practice. The teacher can conduct an oral reading analysis or an oral reading fluency check at this time.

However, if the cross-age tutoring piece is not in place, have EIR partners coach one another as they take turns reading their story and use their take-home sheets to discuss vocabulary and talk about the story.

DAY 4 LESSON
1. Third graders read their story to their first-grade partners.

2. Third graders work with first graders on comprehension and vocabulary from ideas on their individual take-home sheets.

3. Third graders listen as first graders read their EIR story and coach as needed.

DAY 5 LESSON
1. The teacher and students discuss the partner reading experience from the previous day. They talk about things that went well, share problems, and talk about solutions to problems.

2. There are several activities to choose from for Step 2. Using a text at their grade level, the teacher and students read a short selection and focus on attacking multisyllabic words, discuss vocabulary, summarize, and generate and answer thought-provoking comprehension questions. Or, students engage in independent reading as the teachers conduct an oral reading analysis or oral reading fluency check on one or more students. Or, the teacher assesses students’ abilities to write summaries for short texts or to write answers to high-level thinking and comprehension strategy questions. Remember, you will spend two days on Day 5 activities (skipping Day 4 activities) if the cross-age tutoring component is not in place.

Cross-Age Tutoring (or Partner Work)

Ideally, EIR instruction is done within the context of a cross-age tutoring program in which third-grade students tutor first-grade EIR students—or any first-grade students who need reading support. The third-grade children meet for 20 minutes a day for three days to prepare to work with younger EIR students on the fourth day. On the fourth day, they read a picture book or section of a longer book to their younger students and listen to the first graders read their own EIR story. On the fifth day, the third-grade students use the word-recognition, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies they have been practicing with their EIR books as they read from grade-level classroom textbooks. This work on Day 5 helps to build their confidence reading grade-level material.

Teachers report that the cross-age tutoring focus of the grade 3 EIR model appeals to their students and gives them a reason for working on their reading other than “to catch up because they are behind.” Also, these students are proud to have been selected to work with younger students in reading and look forward to and enjoy working with their tutees. Research supports the efficacy of cross-age tutoring efforts as well (Guzetti 2002).

If you are unable to set up the cross-age tutoring component of EIR lessons, then on Day 3, students work with a partner in the EIR group instead. They reread their story to one another, discuss the questions they generated, and talk about the meanings of the vocabulary they identified on their take-home sheets. Day 5 activities are completed on both Day 4 and Day 5 if you are not able to do the cross-age tutoring.

A Word About Using EIR Books

The children all work on the same book for the week. Books are either narrative or informational books. The teacher selects relatively short books that will appeal to third and first graders and are written at a second- to third-grade reading level. (See Table 3-1 for a list of exemplar books for the grade 3 program.) More on selecting books for EIR lessons can be found at the end of this chapter.

As explained earlier, the comprehension activities for the narrative and informational books are somewhat different. Since narrative books tend to be easier, in the first half of the year, I recommend using more narrative than informational books as children work on fluency. During the second half of the year, I recommend using more informational than narrative books so children can work on their comprehension of informational text.
Grade 3 Exemplar Book Titles

Keep in mind that these books should be at a second- to third-grade reading level and appeal to first-grade reading partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Book</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative Books</strong></td>
<td>George and Martha, Tons of Fun</td>
<td>James Marshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gila Monsters Meet You at the Airport</td>
<td>Marjorie Sharmat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martha Blah Blah</td>
<td>Susan Meddaugh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space Case</td>
<td>Edward Marshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I Am Old with You</td>
<td>Angela Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big Mama's</td>
<td>Donald Crews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Easy Readers</strong></td>
<td>Amelia Bedelia and the Surprise Shower</td>
<td>Peggy Parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Narrative)</td>
<td>Clara and the Bookwagon</td>
<td>Nancy Levinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Come Back, Amelia Bedelia</td>
<td>Peggy Parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mouse Tales</td>
<td>Arnold Lobel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagon Wheels</td>
<td>Barbara Brennan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational</strong></td>
<td>It’s a Fruit, It’s a Vegetable, It’s a Pumpkin</td>
<td>Allan Fowler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>(Rookie Read-About Science Series)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From Seed to Plant</td>
<td>Gail Gibbons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Spend only 1 week on this book.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baby Whales Drink Milk</td>
<td>Barbara Ebensen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Let’s-Read-and-Find-Out Science: Stage 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look Out for Turtles</td>
<td>Melvin Burger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Let’s-Read-and-Find-Out Science: Stage 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Look at Teeth</td>
<td>Allan Fowler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Rookie Read About Science)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monster Bugs</td>
<td>Lucille Penner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Step-into-Reading, Step 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snakes Are Hunters</td>
<td>Patricia Lauber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amazing Buildings</td>
<td>Deborah Lock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(DK Reader, Level 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desert Mammals</td>
<td>Elaine Landau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A True Book)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ocean Mammals</td>
<td>Elaine Landau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-1 Grade 3 Exemplar Book Titles
OVERVIEW OF THE FIVE-DAY LESSON STEPS

To recap, the weekly model shifts students to working with a first grader on Day 4 (or EIR partner on Day 3), which boosts their confidence as capable readers and mentors:

- Students have three days of 20-minute, small-group instruction with a relatively short narrative or informational book that is written on a second- to beginning-third-grade level. Instruction focuses on decoding multisyllabic words, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension strategies (summarizing, questioning), and high-level talk about text.

- Ideally, one day is devoted to reading the practiced book to a first-grade student and tutoring on their own EIR text.

- One day may focus on application of EIR strategies to classroom textbooks (or two days may focus on this if the cross-age tutoring is not in place).
Day 1

Lesson Routine

1. The teacher and students read a book they have not read before. The teacher models and assists in decoding multisyllabic words as students are reading. He or she should discuss word meanings in context.

2. The teacher coaches for comprehension.


Day 1, Step 1: Read Story and Work on Word Recognition and Vocabulary

(10 min.)

As you and your students begin reading the book chorally or by taking turns for the first part of the book, you provide on-the-spot teaching of word-recognition strategies as children come to words they don’t know. It is important to continually remind other students to not call out a word if you are working with one child on decoding. You may not have time to read all the way through the book, but students can finish reading their book in Step 3.

Use a consistent strategy with the students for attacking multisyllabic words (Taylor et al. 1995; see Figure 3-2). Also, remind the children regularly that this is a strategy they can use when they are reading on their own. The strategy works best with words already in students’ listening vocabulary, and many of the words struggling readers come across in their EIR texts will, in fact, be words in their listening vocabulary because the books are slightly below grade level.

---

**Strategy for Decoding Multisyllabic Words**

1. Break the word into chunks (approximate syllables) with one vowel (or vowel team) per chunk.

2. Be flexible as you sound out the chunks, especially with the vowel sounds. If one sound doesn’t work, try another (refer to the Advanced Vowel Chart, Figure 3-3).

3. Remember to use context clues.

4. After you sound out the chunks, try it again only faster.

5. Remember that this will only get you close to the right word. Keep thinking of context.

---

*Figure 3-2* Strategy for Decoding Multisyllabic Words
### Advanced Vowel Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>cat, cake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>hen, me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>pig, bike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>fox, rope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>bug, cube</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ea</td>
<td>bread, meat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oo</td>
<td>school, book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ow</td>
<td>cow, snow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oa</td>
<td>boat</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>oi</td>
<td>oil</td>
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<td>ee</td>
<td>feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>train</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ou</td>
<td>house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3-3  Advanced Vowel Chart*
It really doesn’t matter if the children break a word into the exact syllables or not as found in the dictionary. Instead, they need to know that a chunk, or an approximate syllable, has one vowel or vowel team per chunk. They need to learn to be flexible with their sounding out of syllables and blending syllables together. They should be given a copy of the advanced vowel chart (see Figure 3-3) to help them remember the most common sounds for a particular vowel or vowel team. Consistently remind students that if one sound doesn’t work, they should try another.

Also, remind the children frequently that their sounding out will only get them close to the real word. As they are blending syllables together, they need to think of a word that is close to what they are saying and that make sense in the story. I often find that children don’t rely on context enough as an additional support when they are sounding out multisyllabic words.

**See it in Action**

**DAY 1**

**Decoding Long Words**

Betsy Larson and her third-grade students begin to read the first story from *George and Martha, Tons of Fun* (Marshall 1986) that they will read to their first-grade reading buddies later in the week. Betsy coaches them as they come to multisyllabic words that they can’t decode, and she also makes sure that they understand the meanings of these longer, less familiar words. When the group comes to *misunderstanding*, Sara is able to decode it. Betsy asks Sara to explain how she decoded the word successfully. Sara points to the word chunks, mis-un-der-stand-ing, as she says the word slowly again. Betsy asks, “What is a misunderstanding?” Tiara says, “If you don’t want to do something.” Betsy is supportive but adds to this for more precision. “You may not want to do something, or you may not understand something like a homework assignment, so you don’t get it done on time. Friends can have a misunderstanding, too.” They continue to read the story.

**Teaching Vocabulary**

Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) discuss the importance of talking about word meanings at point of contact in a story. As the group comes to words not in their listening vocabulary while they are reading their EIR book, stop to talk about the meanings of these words. When possible, ask the children to give an approximate meaning for a word by using clues in the text. In this case, part of the discussion should focus on what clues were used to try to figure out a word.
meaning. However, it is important to keep in mind that using context clues is not an easy task for students; available clues may be insufficient to determine a word’s meaning. If there are not sufficient context clues for an unfamiliar word in the text you are reading, tell students the word’s meaning, or help them look it up in the dictionary.

**see it in action**

**Coaching on Vocabulary**

On Day 1, Betsy coaches on word-recognition strategies, words, meanings, and comprehension. She patiently works with the students as they take turns reading parts of the story. The other students are patient, too, when Betsy stops to coach an individual. As students read, Betsy coaches them on decoding multisyllabic words, discusses the meanings of these words, discusses the meanings of potentially unfamiliar phrases in the story, and talks about what the characters are doing, how they are feeling, and why. Tiara gets stuck on the word *practicing*. Betsy asks if anyone can help, and Milan offers the word predicting. When Betsy asks them to look at the word again, Sara comes up with *practicing*. The group then works together to sound out the word *concentration*. Betsy has Tiara reread from the beginning and then finish the page. She asks, “What does it mean when George says it takes concentration to do a handstand?” Darren offers, “Like when you are taking a test.” After the group has sounded out *offended*, Betsy explains how the other words in the sentence, Martha was *offended*, hurt, and mad, help them figure out the meaning of *offended*. Betsy and the students talk about how Martha is feeling and what *offended* means.

**Day 1, Step 2: Coaching for Comprehension**

(5 min.)

The notion of coaching kids for understanding should guide story discussions. In my research, I have found that limited higher-level questioning occurs in the elementary grades but a focus on high-level talk and writing about text increases students’ reading abilities (Taylor et al. 2000; 2003; 2005; 2007). The purpose of coaching for comprehension is to ask questions that stretch the children’s thinking and get them to think and talk about things in the story that they may not have come up with on their own. Through these prompts, students interpret the story, relate a concept in the story to their own lives, and make other connections that deepen their understanding. Since coaching for comprehension occurs
on Day 2 as well, you need to remind the children that not all of them will get to answer on each day. However, if the children are eager to share their ideas, they can talk with a partner.

Examples of questions to coach for comprehension are shown in Figure 3-4. It is important to keep in mind that the questions are only examples of the kinds of questions that you might ask to stretch children’s thinking about the texts they are reading.

**Day 1, Step 3: Students Reread Story**

*(5 min.)*

On their own, students finish reading or reread the story. As children practice rereading the EIR book they will read later in the week to a first-grade child (or EIR partner), they are working on their fluency. Because they want to do a good job reading to their younger partners, they have a reason to take this practicing seriously.
Thank you for sampling this resource.

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