

Executive Summary

THE ALIGNMENT OF WEEKLY READER TO THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL READING PANEL

A STUDY BY

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Study Overview

The purpose of the study by CRF and Associates, Inc., (CRF) was three-fold:

1. To conduct an analysis of the Report of the National Reading Panel (NRP) to identify appropriate recommendations and standards that resulted from evidence-based studies of experimental and quasi-experimental research on literacy;
2. To invite a panel of top educational leaders in reading, including representatives from colleges of education, reading specialists, educational administrators and community and parent leaders, to examine the extent to which *Weekly Reader* and its accompanying teacher's guides align to the findings of the NRP; and
3. To determine, based on these findings, if *Weekly Reader* meets the research-based requirements for classroom materials in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and provides the support required under NCLB for "highly qualified teachers."

This study by C.R. F and Associates, Inc., focused specifically on *Weekly Reader* and, even more specifically, on the kindergarten through grade three editions of that publication. The 14 highly qualified panel members selected for this study closely mirrored the background of the members of the National Review Panel. Based on the findings of the NRP in the five key literacy areas of phonemics awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and text comprehension, the author developed a 75-item questionnaire to assess the effectiveness of *Weekly Reader* materials in both providing a strong literacy-based instructional approach and providing support for teachers in the delivery of instruction.

Finding

The responses suggest that *Weekly Reader* materials meet the standards enumerated by the National Reading Panel and, thus, should be considered as viable classroom, extended day and/or supplementary materials under the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act and Reading First.

Phonemic Awareness

Evaluators rated the student materials particularly high in such areas as:

- motivation
- creativity and vibrancy
- focus on one or two phonemic awareness skills

Evaluators rated the teachers' materials particularly high in such areas:

- Motivation

Phonics Instruction

High ratings were received in such areas as:

- application of skills to daily reading activity
- appropriateness of the student materials for use in flexible instructional groups

Fluency

Rated highly in such areas as:

- student materials can be used in guided oral reading

- include reading passages that can be read multiple times as student receive guidance or feedback
- teachers' guides include strategies for using student materials in guided oral reading procedures

Vocabulary

Very strong ratings were reported in:

- Student materials allow for repetition and multiple exposure to vocabulary.
- Vocabulary words in the student materials are words that are likely to appear in many contexts.
- The student materials provide words in context to allow for indirect instruction.
- The student materials use imagery to help students decode unknown and unfamiliar words.
- The teacher's guides include strategies for incorporating repetition and multiple exposure to vocabulary items.
- The teacher's guides include strategies for presenting the vocabulary words in the student materials in multiple contexts.

Comprehension

Also scoring highly were items such as:

- Student materials include questions to which students respond and receive teacher feedback
- Student materials are appropriate sources for question generation in which the reader asks him/herself what, when, where, why, what will happen, how, and who questions
- Student materials are age appropriate
- Teachers' guides include strategies for designing pre-instruction prior to reading
- Teachers' guides include strategies to differentiate instruction

The interesting and motivating reading material found in *Weekly Reader* provides an opportunity for the type of practice that has been found to have a positive impact on word recognition, fluency and comprehension skills. The identification of keywords and the graphic interfaces for most *Weekly Reader* articles were key factors in the high ratings CRF reviewers gave the publication in vocabulary. Reviewers, in their comments, specifically praised *Weekly Reader's* integration of many disciplines, with the content-specific vocabulary inherent in such presentation.

Both the age-appropriate writing and the graphic presentation of *Weekly Reader* assist with text comprehension. *Weekly Reader* student editions could be used with all of the eight instructional techniques for text comprehension identified by the National Reading Panel.

The CRF study provides validation to educational decision makers that *Weekly Reader* meets the principles for literacy instruction set forth by the National Reading Panel. In addition, CRF reviewers noted the highly motivational nature of *Weekly Reader*, citing its "eye-catching and appealing" graphics and layout, the high interest content, age appropriate vocabulary and reading level, and the extension activities.

About the Review Panel

The panel selected for this study closely mirrors the background of the members of the National Review Panel. Members of the panel are:

Constance R. Clark, Ed.D.

Dr. Clark is the Superintendent of Schools, Westbury Union Free School District, New York. Her recent experience as teacher and administrator prepared her to be honored as a New York Superintendent whose Middle School posted the most improved test scores in the state. Dr. Clark served as an Evaluator for the National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Program and as Director at the College Board.

Linda Cohen

Linda Cohen serves as principal of Dover Elementary School, San Pablo, California. Ms. Cohen has extensive experience in teaching English Language Learners in public school systems and Haywood State University, California.

William Cook, Ph.D.

Dr. Cook serves as Professor of English and Chairman of the English Department at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. He received Dartmouth's Distinguished Teaching Award in 1988 and is the college's Israel Evans Professor of Oratory Belles and Letters.

Edithe Brock Dobbins

Ms. Dobbins is an Early Childhood Curriculum Resource Teacher for Fairfax County Public Schools. She has taught students in grades 1-6 and serves as liaison to the Head Start Early Literacy Program.

Lois Harrison-Jones, Ed.D.

Dr. Harrison-Jones is an Associate Clinical Professor in the School of Education at Howard University, Washington, DC. She is a former Associate Professor at the Harvard School of Education and former superintendent of schools in Boston, MA and Richmond, VA

Ronald L. Houston

As the Director of School Improvement at the Delaware State Department of Education, Mr. Houston was elected President of the National Association of Title I Directors. He has served as a public school teacher and administrator, college professor and a consultant to state boards of education.

M. Kent Kultgen

Mr. Kultgen is Superintendent of Public Schools in Chouteau, Montana. Chouteau is a small, rural, isolated school district and depends heavily on technology and supplemental reading materials to enhance the districts curriculum.

William Lobosco, Ph.D.

Upon retirement from the U.S. Department of Education as Deputy Director of the National Title I Program, Dr. Lobosco serves as an education consultant to schools, local,

and state education agencies. As an advisor to the Department of Education, he drafted policy guidance for the Reading Excellence Act and early childhood programs.

Ruth B. Love, Ph.D.

Ruth Love serves as a Professor in the School of Education at San Francisco State University and President of RBL Enterprises. She is formerly the Director of the Right to Read Program, U.S. Department of Education and formerly Superintendent of schools in Oakland, CA and Chicago, IL.

Mary Pat Klein Pfeil

Ms. Pfeil is an Administrator with the Wauwatosa, WI school district where she has served as Interim Superintendent, Director of Community Relations and Director of Human Resources. At Marquette University, she served as Instructional Publications Advisor and has been elected to the Board of Directors, National School Public Relations Association.

Mary Jane Mikuriya

Upon retirement from the San Francisco Public Schools as a teacher, administrator and principal evaluator of Title I and other federal programs, Ms. Mikuriya works as an independent researcher and evaluator. She served several years in the United States Office of Education as a Fellow and Program Advisor to the Associate Commissioner.

Barbara W. Milton, Ed.D.

Dr. Milton is Executive Director at the McFarland Institute where her responsibilities cover research, instrument design, strategic planning, evaluation and assessment. She was the first project director for the Parent Assistance Coordinating Center, providing support for 66 other parent centers. She was Director of Research at a major land grant college.

Anne C. Paone

A master teacher for over 25 years, Mrs. Paone teaches at the Hillsmere Elementary School in Anne Arundel County. She has used the Weekly Reader for more than 15 years with regular and special education students and students learning English.

Patricia N. Quick

Ms. Quick is a Reading Specialist at Swans Creek Elementary School in Prince William County, VA. She has several certifications as a reading teacher and served as an Instructor of Early Literacy at George Mason University. She has been in the classroom for more than 30 years.

About CRF and Associates, Inc.

Richard L. Fairley, Ed.D is the president and founder of CRF and Associates, a creative and highly competent consulting firm specializing in education.

Dr. Fairley has over 35 years experience working with the U.S. Department of Education, State Departments of Education, local school districts and individual schools as a teacher, administrator, innovator, reformer, and parent. He directed the ESEA Title I program for more than a decade. He initiated the requirements for parental involvement, laid the

foundation for school-based management and introduced the concept of performance standards and accountability.

Research Resources

Research Quotes	Weekly Reader Offers
<p>“The rationale for the explicit teaching of comprehension skills is that comprehension can be improved by teaching students to use specific cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to understanding what they are reading...explicit or formal instruction in the application of comprehension strategies has been shown to be highly effective in enhancing understanding. “ National Reading Panel (2000)</p>	<p>Explicit instruction for teachers on including comprehension lessons within WR content. Back page for student activities focus on reading comprehension questions. Reading assessments 3-4 times per year, which also focus on comprehension strategies.</p>
<p>“Essentially, there are three points in an instructional framework at which students can use reading strategies for comprehension; (1) before reading, (2) during reading, and (3) after reading text assignments.” Vacca (2002)</p> <p>“Additionally, these prereading strategies can reveal if the information students ‘know’ is accurate. Studies show that readers who have misperceptions about a topic often overlook, misinterpret, or don’t remember text information that disagrees with their background information, however incorrect that might be.” Barton & Billmeyer (1998)</p>	<p>WR Teachers’ Guides, provide strategies to activate prior knowledge and build background knowledge; strategies to monitor students’ comprehension during reading, and extension activities to extend the concepts.</p>
<p>“Research conducted in the past ten years reveals that vocabulary knowledge is the single most important factor contributing to reading comprehension. Moreover studies conducted on the importance of vocabulary instruction demonstrate that it plays a major role in improving comprehension.” Barton and Billmeyer (1998).</p>	<p>Weekly Reader Teachers’ Guides provide specific vocabulary lists for each article. Grade Pre K through grade 3 provide specific activities to target Reading First key areas, including vocabulary. In addition, ESOL tips and strategies in grade 3 help to identify tips and techniques for vocabulary and comprehension.</p>

“If children are to become truly literate,	Weekly Reader has been the leading
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they need opportunities to read and write in response to expository texts.” Moss, et al. (1997)	publisher of non-fiction, expository classroom publications for over 100 years.
“The Correlational studies have identified phonemic awareness and letter knowledge as the two best school-entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during their first 2 years in school.” “These findings show that teaching children to manipulate phonemes in words was highly effective across all the literacy domains and outcomes.” National Reading Panel (2000)	The Kindergarten through Grade 3 editions of Weekly Reader place great emphasis on such skills as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alphabetic awareness • Making visual discriminations • Acquiring new vocabulary • Recognizing rhyming words
“Finally, it is important to emphasize that systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program. Phonics instruction is never a total reading program.” National Reading Panel (2000)	Weekly Reader allows the teacher to combine phonics instruction using non-fiction, content related material which is an important component of a balanced reading program.
“Adequate progress in learning to read English (or any alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different texts ” (Snow,Burns,&Griffin,1998)	Weekly Reader provides teachers with specific fluency activities to use with the high-interest, non-fiction content of its publications.
“Gough and Tunmer (1986) proposed that reading consists of two primary components: <i>decoding</i> , or word recognition, and language <i>comprehension</i> , both of which are necessary for reading proficiency. Children do not become proficient readers unless both components are fully developed.” Evers, 1998	Content related vocabulary words are an essential component of Weekly Reader publications. Activities for both decoding and language comprehension are included in both the student editions and the teachers’ guides.

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