Curriculum Matters! Reading lessons that work

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THANK YOU to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and to the World Bank for support for the EGRA Plus project  and to USAID for support for reading/math in the Liberia Teacher Training Program
“We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children to read. We already have reams of research, hundreds of successful programs, and thousands of effective schools to show us the way. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far” (McEwan, 1998).
Overview

• Context/challenges

• How do you know you need a new approach?
Overview (cont’d)

How does curriculum promote/support good teaching?

What are the key features of an effective curriculum/program?

Sustaining Success
Context: Liberia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Metric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td>58 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official language and language of instruction</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of languages</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median years of education</td>
<td>Female: 1.6 years, Male: 5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest primary school enrollment ratio on the continent</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Africa Development Indicators (ADI) 2010, the latest annual report from the World Bank on social and economic conditions across the continent.
Context for the Liberia EGRA Plus Success

- Cascade Model: coaches train teachers
- Highly scripted Reading Intervention: Evidence-based
- Continuous Assessment: reading report cards
- Coach trackers to document school visits
- Management visits to check on progress

World Change Starts with Educated Children.
How do you know you need a more effective reading curriculum?

STUDENT DATA

In a 2011 baseline study in grades 1-3 (Liberia Teacher Training Program [USAID], Phase 2), the average number of words read correctly in a simple passage of 60 words was **13.4**.

International standards: 60 correct words per minute by grade 3

Grade 3 (U.S.): 107 correct words per minute (50%ile at end of year, 120 for 75%ile)
How do you know you need a more effective reading curriculum?

EGRA Plus results after 1.5 years of intervention

- **Baseline**: 12.5, 14.4, 15.5
- **Mid-term**: 15.9, 21.7, 23.9
- **Final**: 19.6, 22.6, 43.7

Legend:
- Control
- Light treatment
- Full treatment
What can we change to make a real difference in student learning?
Begin with the teaching context: How reading is taught

What are the most common teaching models in your primary classrooms?

a) Lecture?
b) Write on board and students copy?
c) Read from text and students repeat?
d) The same few students in the front row raising their hands and answering all of the questions?
Automaticity in effective teaching routines

Just as students need to practice, practice, and practice new skills—so do teachers!!
It’s not just the lessons: it’s changing how teachers think about what and how they teach.
The Alterable Variables: What can curriculum contribute to improved teaching and learning?
Good curriculum improves TEACHING as well as LEARNING

REMEMBER: children need to

a) READ, not repeat
b) SPELL, not copy
c) BE ENGAGED 100% of the time, 100% of students
Good curriculum improves TEACHING as well as LEARNING

Core elements of effective lessons for primary grade children include

• Alignment with national curriculum
• evidence-based scope and sequence of skills (Big 5 skills)
• explicit instruction in key component skills
• Scripted lessons for teachers
• Continuous assessment to check student progress
What do we mean by ‘effective’ curriculum?

- Evidence-based: research on student learning outcomes
  - Hattie (2009): “Direct instruction methods have been most powerful in teaching phonics skills.” Evidence from over 800 meta-analyses relating to student achievement in reading and probably in many other fundamental skills in reading and math
  - Explicit instruction that engages students in learning, and is interactive with lively pacing – NOT boring rote learning
Evidence/research-based approach to curriculum

Reading lessons based on a “speech to print” (Moats, 2004) approach to reading instruction

Simple, evidence-based routines employed in the basic level of instruction: “I do, we do, you do”

A direct/explicit instruction model (Carnine, Silbert, Kame’enui, & Tarver, 2004; Rosenshine, 1995; U.S. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).
Materials

✓ Scripted teacher lessons

✓ Decodable books*

✓ Locally written library books to each school

✓ Reading Report cards
Speech to Print approach (sounds of language mapped onto print – not teaching letters first)

Explicit approach with support (I do, we do, you do)

A sample lesson
**New:** Teach the sound for ‘sh’ using the instructional model below.

**CONSONANT DIGRAPH /sh/:** Two consonants together that make one new sound. When you see ‘sh’ together in a word, they stand for a new sound. Underline the 2 letters to remind students that the 2 letters together make ONE sound.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Teacher “I do”</th>
<th>Teacher and Students “We do”</th>
<th>Students practice “You do”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Phonemic awareness (NO WRITING) | The digraph ‘sh’ makes the /sh/ sound. Listen, /sh/.  
What is the first sound you hear in ‘shop’? /sh/ | Now, let’s say the sound that the digraph ‘sh’ makes. Everyone, the sound for the digraph ‘sh’ is .... Drop your arm to cue class to respond with you. (whole class) /sh/ | Your turn. Class, what sound does the digraph ‘sh’ make?  
Drop your arm to cue class to respond with you. (whole class) /sh/. |

**Phonemic awareness practice**

1. Ask students to put thumbs up if they hear the /sh/ sound at the beginning of these words: (DO NOT WRITE THEM) ship, queen, shake, shoot, zero, yellow, share, itch, useful (remember that it is the SOUND, not the letter students need to listen for!!!!!).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PA</strong></td>
<td>M: a, t T: s, o W: m, b TH: e F: c</td>
<td>M: f, r T: c W: n TH: k, p F: i, h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonics</strong></td>
<td>letter name: a, t</td>
<td>letter names f, r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Vocabulary +  **</td>
<td>next, and</td>
<td>on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sight Words</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word Wizard</td>
<td>Word Wizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Flash Cards with letters</td>
<td>Flash Cards with letters and words: dad, let</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flash Cards with letters and words: net, lad, bad, sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flash Cards with letters and words: pat, pop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flash Cards with letters and words: it, fit, hat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td>Questions (Q) about read aloud</td>
<td>Q about read aloud. Decodable books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q about read aloud. Decodable books</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q about read aloud. Decodable books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DAILY SEQUENCE: WEEKS 3 AND 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonics</strong></td>
<td>letter name: j, u</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Vocabulary +  **</td>
<td>Word Wizard</td>
<td>Word Wizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sight Words</strong></td>
<td>his, rage</td>
<td>but, enjoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it</td>
<td>what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word Wizard</td>
<td>there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Word Wizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Flash Cards with words: cup, jam</td>
<td>Flash Cards with letters and words: peg, zip, thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flash Cards with letters and words: wet, hug, up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flash Cards with letters and words: wet, vat</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q about read aloud. Decodable books</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comprehension**

Q about read aloud. Decodable books.
Daily lesson content

Daily lessons included 5 components (NRP, 2000):

- phonological awareness,
- phonics,
- fluency,
- vocabulary,
- comprehension
Daily Instruction that includes

Sufficient instructional time:

✓ 45 minutes minimum daily instruction in READING

✓ 5 days a week
Daily Instruction that includes

• Systematic review of learned skills

• Phonological/phonemic awareness: awareness that words are made up of distinct sounds

• Phonics: The sounds in words map onto print – far more than letter-sounds…

• Fluency: The ability to read text accurately, quickly and with good expression. (Meyer & Felton, 1999)
Daily Instruction that includes

- Vocabulary: focus on building student word consciousness and increasing vocabulary knowledge

- Comprehension: beginning with listening comprehension, using short locally written (if possible) stories with comprehension strategies explicitly taught
Effective early reading instruction must build reading skills in five important areas by providing instruction that is both engaging and motivating.

- **Phonemic Awareness**
- **Phonics**
- **Fluency**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Comprehension strategies**

Taught by methods that are:

- Identifying words accurately and fluently
- Constructing meaning once words are identified
- Engaging & motivating
The Big Five: Phonics

Mapping sounds to graphemes (letters and letter combinations) in beginning phonics.
World Change Starts with Educated Children.

Building new Teaching Habits

A model of instruction that teaches skills effectively and efficiently.

"I do, we do, you do"

Why is this so powerful?

model
practice
engage
The Big Five: Fluency

“One of the great mysteries to challenge researchers is how people learn to read and comprehend text rapidly and with ease. A large part of the explanation lies in how they learn to read individual words. Skilled readers are able to look at thousands of words and immediately recognize their meanings without any effort.” (Ehri, 2002)
“In fact, the automaticity with which skillful readers recognize words is the key to the whole system...The reader’s attention can be focused on the meaning and message of a text only to the extent that it’s free from fussing with the words and letters.” (Marilyn Adams)
The Big Five: Vocabulary

How do we learn words?

– Through exposure to multiple examples in context, spoken and written

– Through explicit instruction:
  • Constructing child friendly definitions
  • Analyzing word structure
  • Exploring word relationships
The Big Five: Comprehension
What accounts for Comprehension

The “Simple View” —

Decoding $\times$ Listening Comprehension $=$ Reading Comprehension

Gough, 1986
Additional Components of a comprehensive reading program

- Coaching: Cascade Model
- Social Marketing: Radio Shows, Reading Competitions
- Parent and Community Report Cards
World Change Starts with Educated Children.
Using an international oral reading fluency goal

- Primary teachers in Liberia set an interim goal of a minimum of 60 correct words read per minute at the end of grade three as a goal for all students – an ambitious goal.
- All children reading by grade 3 is a goal for Liberia.
## GRADE 2: Early grade reading supplementary report card for the community/PTA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Period 2</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
<th>Period 4</th>
<th>Period 5</th>
<th>Period 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School average</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>Score</td>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>Score</td>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter-reading (letters per minute)</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>60+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story-reading (words per minute)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story understanding (5/5, 4/5, 3/5 and so on)</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who will lead the effort/take charge?

- Partnerships are key: Ministry of Education leads the effort
- Decisions among partners are based upon student data, evidence-based curriculum examples
What is really hard to do…
All children reading

FOCUS relentlessly

FIDELITY of implementation

FOR ALL TEACHERS
Sustaining the Success

1. Require a reading course in all teacher education programs.

2. Build national Teacher Continuous Professional Development with reading coaches.

3. Develop a national reading report card
National Reading Curriculum

- If reading is NOT a separate subject, work with MoE and partners to make reading a subject
- Partner with MoE to develop national curriculum standards for reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Strand</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>New Benchmark</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Process</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>The student uses a variety of strategies to comprehend grade level text.</td>
<td>The student will identify a text’s features (eg. Title, subheadings, captions, illustrations), use them to make and confirm predictions, and establish a purpose for reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Process</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>The student demonstrates knowledge of the alphabetic principle and applies grade level phonics skills to read text.</td>
<td>The student will use knowledge of spelling patterns (e.g., vowel diphthongs, difficult word families)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What if your lessons are not explicit enough?

There are many resources for explicit lessons. For example, in English there is the website [www.freereading.net](http://www.freereading.net) with a sample comprehensive 40 lesson program in beginning reading that is being used in 160 countries.

Develop a phase one set of lessons, try them out in classrooms for a few weeks or a month or two. Check on student learning and ask for teacher feedback. Revise and improve!
Is there enough time allocated for reading?

REMEMBER:

- Reading is the most important subject taught in the early grades. Reading is the foundation for all academic learning. SO…

- Schedule reading as the FIRST subject taught in the day and make certain that teachers teach reading at least 45 minutes every day of the week in every grade/standard in primary school.

- Teach other subjects THROUGH reading: science content, history/social studies.
Thank you!