

The American Reading Company team is honored to receive an “all green” review of our Language Arts curriculum, ARC Core, which turns balanced literacy into transformative literacy for both students and educators.

On the whole, we believe that the EdReports review of ARC Core is insightful, accurate, and useful. We do want to respond to three points made by the review team:

1. **ELL Supports:** We have evidence from schools across the country that our approach creates a supportive literacy environment in which language learners thrive, often making multiple years of reading growth in one year. However, our materials would benefit from additional explicit suggestions within individual lessons on ways teachers can further support language learners within the ELA classroom. We plan to add these suggestions to the curriculum for this 2017/2018 school year.
2. **Kindergarten/1st Grade and the Instruction of Vowel Sounds:** For this indicator we believe that the reviewers misunderstood how ARC Core implements Foundational Skills most likely because the ARC approach is very different from traditional programs that focus on any and all Foundational Skills instead of working in a strategic taxonomy of skills that build one upon the other. In ARC Core, Foundational Skills instruction is built on the developmental reading taxonomy of the IRLA. As reading expert Marilyn J. Adams explains in her seminal work on beginning reading, knowledge of vowel sounds develops after consonants and is best taught in the context of onset and rime before moving to noticing the individual vowel sounds. Based on this Foundational Skills sequence, vowels are included in daily writing experiences from Day 1 but are not explicitly taught in whole-group Foundational Skills instruction until the end of the Kindergarten year.

However, focusing exclusively on the whole-group instruction of Foundational Skills misses the magic that makes ARC Core a transformative literacy system. From the first month of ARC Core, every child receives 1-1 or small-group instruction on the specific things s/he needs next in the developmental sequence to move his or her reading level – whether the child has entered school a non-reader or multiple years above grade-level. Because of this model, *every student receives explicit instruction in vowel sounds when s/he is ready for the 1B toolkit*, whether that be in September or June.

An additional area of disagreement is on the method of teaching vowels. ARC agrees with experts as diverse as Adams, Gaskins, and Cunningham that the human brain is a pattern seeker, not a rule follower; therefore, teaching readers to notice word families and other phonics patterns – is more effective than spending too much time on the “short a” sound.

In summary, the ARC method to Foundational Skills instruction is research-based and proven to be both efficient and effective at producing proficient early readers.

3. Grammar Instruction: ARC Core takes the best-practice approach that 1) grammar instruction is best done in the context of students working on writing and publishing pieces that matter to them, not in isolated grammar lessons and 2) instead of delivering grammar mini-lessons lockstep from a set sequence produced by a publisher, teachers should use the grammar errors made in students’ written work to determine which grammar concepts would be most appropriate to teach – and to which students. We are proud of the way that this method is integrated into the daily writing work of ARC Core at every grade level.

Though we differ with the EdReports review team on these few points, they are, in the grand scheme, minor quibbles in what is a careful, balanced review of ARC’s work. In closing, ARC thanks the EdReports review team for their dedication to this essential endeavor.

References

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