

(Continued)

What Teachers Need to Know About Teaching Reading
How to diagnose spelling and reading skills
How to use strategies that help students gain fluency
How to help students understand the rules of syntax
The dependence of reading comprehension on other aspects of reading and on language skills
Procedures for ongoing in-class assessment of children's reading abilities
How to modify instructional strategies based on in-class assessments
Understanding the needs of students with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency
How to use a variety of reading intervention strategies to address different learning styles and cultures
How to apply research judiciously to their practice and how to update their knowledge base

### Offer Professional Development in Reading to Building Principals

Principals are the instructional leaders of their school. They need to become familiar with the latest scientific research on reading, especially with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Learning to read is far too important a goal to be left to discretionary programs and individual teacher decisions about what approach to take. The challenge for the principal is to maintain consistency of instruction while still encouraging the unique contributions of teachers. In the end, however, principals must insist that the district select a scientifically based reading program, ensure that all teachers of beginning reading follow it, and stress the development of phonological awareness.

Effective reading instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades should be one of the principal's top priorities (Torgesen et al., 2007). Below is a brief survey that may help principals and teachers determine the extent to which the school's reading program is meeting the needs of all children.

When you have completed the chart, add up the values of the circled numbers to get a total score. The highest possible score is 63. Take a close look at any component with a score of 1. Why is that the case? What can you do about it?

### *Preparing for the Common Core State Standards*

Adopting the Common Core State Standards will require principals at all grade levels to prepare their faculty and staff for implementation. For the

<b>Components of Our Reading Program</b>			
<p><b>Directions:</b> Circle the number that most closely describes the extent to which a component is present in your school’s reading program. When finished, connect the circles with straight lines to get a profile of your reading program. Add up the values of the circled numbers (highest score is 63). Discuss the importance of any individual component that receives a score of 1.</p>			
<b>Component</b>	<b>Little</b>		
	<b>or None</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Significant</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Program is research based	1	2	3
Teachers have been trained in research-based strategies related to the program	1	2	3
Emphasis on phonemic awareness	1	2	3
Systematic instruction and practice in phonics	1	2	3
Systematic instruction in the alphabetic principle	1	2	3
Activities and practice to enhance word decoding	1	2	3
Activities and practice on word recognition	1	2	3
Activities and practice on semantics	1	2	3
Activities and practice on syntax	1	2	3
Writing activities are coordinated with reading instruction	1	2	3
Activities for building vocabulary growth	1	2	3
Strategies that use morphology to build spelling skills and enhance vocabulary growth	1	2	3
Instructional practices develop the children’s ability to monitor their reading comprehension	1	2	3
Activities for improving reading fluency	1	2	3
Activities for improving reading comprehension	1	2	3
Strategies for improving content area reading	1	2	3
In-service opportunities connected to the program	1	2	3
Other literature sources are integrated into the program	1	2	3
Instructional practices in middle grades build on reading and literacy growth in the primary grades	1	2	3
Interventions for helping teachers diagnose and address reading difficulties	1	2	3
Constructive communication about the program is maintained with parents	1	2	3

English Language Arts standards, principals may wish to consider the following steps, among others (NAESP, 2013):

- Engage teacher leaders so that teachers buy into the process.
- Take the small step necessary to help teachers adjust to the rigor and expectations of the standards.
- Allow plenty of time for teachers to discuss and reflect on the implementation.
- Inform parents of the coming curriculum changes.
- Create an ongoing, job-embedded professional development program for English language arts that emphasizes rigor, text complexity, and use of research/evidence-based strategies.
- Discuss implications for social studies and science courses.
- Discuss the intent and types of assessments and the need to document the evidence of student achievement.
- Develop plans for struggling students.

The details for facilitating these steps will vary, of course, depending, for example, on the degree to which each school has unique populations—such as the number of English language learners and students with special needs—the socioeconomic level of the school’s community, and the rate of teacher turnover.

### Answer to Test Question #10

**Question:** The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts include a basic curriculum and a selection of assessment instruments.

**Answer:** *False.* The standards are a list of knowledge and skill goals. What content and what instructional methods are used to achieve the goals are left to the states and school districts to decide. Stakeholders are discussing how the standards are to be assessed.

### *Working With Parents and Students*

Principals provide a great community service when they talk to parents of newborns and alert them to the importance of the early preschool years in developing a child’s literacy. Given the evidence that the brain’s ability to acquire spoken language is at its peak in the early years, parents should create a rich environment that includes lots of communication activities, such as talking, singing, and reading aloud. In schools, this means addressing any language-learning problems quickly to take advantage of the brain’s ability to rewire improper connections during this important period of growth. It also means that parents and teachers should not assume that children with language-based problems are going to be limited in cognitive thought processes as well.

Principals can also ensure that the school’s reading program will help students associate reading with pleasure. For readers having difficulties, principals can develop a library of specially recorded books that have a