

## **Description of Reading/ELA resources supported within the Alpha II program:**

**Using Phonics/Using Word Study** is designed to assist students in putting sounds to work in attacking words (Decoding). Putting both sounds and syllables to work is essential if students are to become independent readers. An individual cannot be expected to understand and react to written ideas before identifying the printed words meant to convey those ideas. This series will help develop those identification skills. Some of the units are designed to develop understanding of sound-symbol associations. Other units are geared to provide the reader many opportunities for immediate application of newly developed understandings and skills in realistic, functional settings.

Using the Phonics books focus on elements such as consonants, consonant substitution, blends, phonograms, and vowel sounds.

Using Word Study books emphasizes syllabication, prefixes, suffixes, and roots.

### **Identified as 'Materials for Developing Comprehension'**

- How to Increase Reading Ability (Harris and Sipay)

**Finding Details/Getting the Facts** – This series' purpose is to develop skill in recalling details from a single reading. Students are encouraged to answer each question without 'turning back' to the selection. The books are structured to encourage recall without re-reading; the passage appears on one side of the page, the questions on the reverse page. Students must absorb as much as possible from their initial reading. Knowing they cannot return to the passage will help students gain skill in Finding Details/Getting the Facts.

Students may read at a slower rate which will help them read for central thought.

*Mental note taking* (recalling a date, a name, an event, or a descriptive word) should become a habit.

Effort to *visualize the text* and retain it should be encouraged to assist in recall.

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**Following Directions** – Proficiency in reading and following directions is basic for success in every school subject, many nonacademic activities, as well as workplace duties.

Four types of directions are incorporated in this series.

1. **Testing and drilling.** These are commonly found in textbooks and workbooks. These provide a check on information presented or a skill taught
2. **Experimentation.** This may require an answer to a problem or provide the reader with an example or a practical application of a principle.
3. **Synthesis.** Bringing together of parts or ingredients to form a whole (e.g. a recipe, or an assembly of a specific product). Directions focus on assembling, and deal with segments and order in which they form *a whole*. The focus is on *'making'* or *'creating'*.
4. **'How to do something'.** These can be identified *performing* directions. These focus on the steps or sequence in learning to do something new (e.g. play a game with rules, ). Focus is on performance accuracy rather than the result.

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**Using the Context** – A thorough understanding of context and its concept often enables a reader to grasp the meaning of words, which translate into meaning of ideas. When context is clear, specific meanings become clear. Instructors may need to provide an insight about the concept of context.

The reader must *relate the whole to the part and the part to the whole*. This requires judgement and insight into the interrelationship of ideas. Attention is directed to language patterns, word form, precise usage, and grammatical correctness. Skill is developed in word recognition. *Precise thinking* is the overall emphasis of this series.

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**Getting the Main Idea** – Identifying the central, most important idea, of any passage is perhaps the most important and basic skill of all reading techniques. It is the primary study skill. It is imperative that students identify the central and main idea from reading. As students develop their reading comprehension skills, their concepts for the main idea will broaden and become more focused.

Suggestions for developing the skill of mastering the main idea:

1. **Topic words** – The meaning of topic words can and may need to be explained in greater detail. Instructors may need to read aloud and accent the topic word or the pronoun referring to the topic word.
  - Definition: *a matter dealt with in a text, discourse, or conversation; a subject.*
  - Synonyms: **subject, subject matter, theme, issue, matter, point, talking point, question, concern, argument, thesis, text, keynote**
  - Example: 'Today's topic is skin care'
2. **Key Question Words** – The first word of a question can be of great assistance to the student. Students should be aware that most questions begin with words *why, when, who, where, how, and what*.
  - Definition: An interrogative word or question word is a function word used to ask a question, such as *what, when, where, who, whom, why, and how*.

If the passage provides **reasons**, the questions will often begin with *why*.

If the passage focuses on **location** or **position**, the question may begin with *where*.

If the passage is centered to **time**, the question can start with *when*.

When the passage explains the **way** or **method**, the question could begin with *how*.

The word *what* can be used in many phrases and can signify different things: *that which, how much, how, or anything that*. Students should be aware that *what* has little value in understanding and correctly answering questions. The main idea is dependent on other words.

3. **Place Clues** – The main idea is often stated in the first and/or last sentence. However, this is not always the case. The main idea may not be directly stated but supported by content within other sentences. If possible, students should practice finding the location of the main idea within a paragraph/passage.
4. **Space Clues** – A student should recognize that the amount of content devoted in a thought or idea within a passage is important. The main idea is not necessarily limited to a single sentence, though it may be stated in one sentence. Other aspects of the passage help provide the central/main idea of the passage.
5. **Questioning** – The ability to reword the main idea statement into a question can be helpful. If the student thinks that one sentence is the main idea, he/she should change it to a question. Then, the student should locate information from the passage to correctly answer the question.
6. **General and Specific Ideas** - Students will be provided the opportunity to distinguish between general to specific ideas. Students will need to understand that some words are more general than others. For example, the realization that *penny* and *nickel* are specific, and more inclusive examples, whereas *money* is a general term.

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**Drawing Conclusions** – This series is designed to develop the important ability to interpret and draw conclusions logically. Students are required to go beyond simple recall. The correct conclusion needs to be based solely on the information presented.

Books 'A' and 'B' contain indirect references. The answers are found in the paragraph but with slightly different wording. The book levels advance in challenge. There are more difficult conclusions involving less evident relationships. The conclusions are more dependent on exact and qualifying words such as *mostly*, *all*, *some*, and *only*.

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**New Practice Readers & Reading for Concepts** – The series provides reading selections covering history, geography, science, mathematics, health, careers, and technology. New vocabulary is introduced at the beginning of each article or a glossary is available for providing definition to unfamiliar words. Assessments immediately follow each reading passage. These self-tests focus on comprehension skills such as identifying main idea, making inferences, finding specific details and understanding vocabulary in content.

'...the following designs dominate expository text structure: sequence/process, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, and general-to-specific. Each pattern has a recognizable format, a main idea with a specific function and distinct linking words.'

Excerpt taken from Educational Research Quarterly

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