SRA Corrective Reading Series

SRA's *Corrective Reading* programs are divided into two strands: Decoding and Comprehension.

A single-strand sequence places students in one strand (**Decoding,** for example), and the students move through the strand from the point of initial placement (**Decoding A, B1, B2,** or **C**) to the end of the strand (**Decoding C).**

The **double-strand sequence** requires that students receive two full periods of instruction each day—one period in a Decoding program and one period in a Comprehension program.

Each Decoding program is designed to be used independently. Students may be placed at the beginning of one program and complete all lessons in that program in either a single-strand or double-strand sequence.

Decoding Strand: A, B1, B2, C

Here is a diagram of the four decoding programs in SRA's *Corrective Reading* series.

Decoding A	Decoding B1	Decoding B2	Decoding C
65 lessons	65 lessons	65 lessons	125 lessons

Decoding A is appropriate for students in grades 3 through high school who are extremely deficient in decoding skills. These students may recognize some words but do not have adequate strategies for accurate decoding of words like **frost** and **track.**

Decoding B1 is appropriate for most problem readers in grades 3 through 12. They guess at words. They have trouble reading words such as **what, that, a,** and **the** when the words appear in a sentence context. They often read synonyms or printed words and are generally inconsistent in their reading behavior (reading a word correctly one time and missing it the next time).

Decoding B2 is appropriate for students in grades 4 through 12 who have some decoding problems, who do not read at an adequate rate, who still tend to confuse words with similar spellings, and who tend to make word-guessing mistakes.

Decoding C is appropriate for students who have mastered many basic reading skills but who have trouble with multisyllabic words and typical textbook material.

A reproducible copy of the **_Corrective Reading_** Decoding Placement Test and details on how to administer it appear in Appendix A at the end of this guide.

The individually administered test measures each student's reading accuracy and oral reading rate. Placement takes into account a student's ability to decode words in sentences and stories.

Progress Through the Decoding Strand

The Decoding programs are designed so that there is a careful progression of skill development from level to level. The Decoding strand has four entry points.

1 Students who begin at Level A should complete A and B1 in a school year (a total of 130 lessons).

2 Students who begin at Level B1 should complete B1 and B2 in a school year (a total of 130 lessons).

3 Students who begin at Level B2 should complete B2 and most of Level C in a school year.

4 Students who begin at Level C should complete C and additional outside reading in a school year.

Features of All Decoding Levels

Each level of SRA's **_Corrective Reading_** Decoding programs has features that have been demonstrated through research studies to be effective in improving student performance. The Decoding strand directly addresses all the critical reading components identified by the National Reading Panel (2002)—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Note that vocabulary and comprehension are not major objectives of the Decoding strand but are thoroughly addressed by the companion **_Corrective Reading_** Comprehension strand.

■ Each level is a core program, not ancillary material. Each level contains all the material you need and provides students with all the practice they need to learn the skills.

■ All words, skills, and decoding strategies are taught through DIRECT INSTRUCTION. This approach is the most efficient for communicating with the students, for evaluating their performance on a moment-to-moment basis, and for achieving student mastery. Students are not simply exposed to skills. Skills are taught.

■ Students are taught everything that is required for what they are to do later. Conversely, they are not taught skills that are not needed for later skill applications. The levels concentrate only on the necessary skills, not the nuances.

■ Each level is based on cumulative skill development. Skills and strategies are taught, with lots of examples. Once a skill or strategy is taught, students receive practice in applying that skill until the end of the level. This type of cumulative development has been demonstrated by research studies to be the most effective method for teaching skills so that they become well learned or automatic.

■ Because of the cumulative development of skills, the difficulty of material increases gradually but steadily.

■ Each level is divided into daily lessons that can usually be presented in a class period (35–45 minutes of teacher-directed work and independent student applications).

- Each level contains Mastery Tests and Individual Reading Checkouts. These tests and checkouts are criterion-referenced performance measures of student **reading behavior.** These measures are part of the lessons. They provide you with very detailed data on student reading performance. They also show the students how their performance is improving as they progress through the program.

- Each level includes an effective management system that is consistent across all levels of the program. Students earn points for performance on each part of the daily lesson. Records of this performance may be used for awarding grades and documenting progress in specific skill areas.

- Each lesson specifies both teacher and student behavior. The lessons are scripted. The scripts specify what you do and say as well as appropriate student responses. The scripted lessons assure that you will (a) use uniform wording, (b) present examples in a manner that communicates effectively with students, and (c) complete a lesson during a class period. The net result of the teacher presentation scripting is that students make a larger number of academically related responses during each period.

Facts About the Problem Reader

The series is designed to change the behavior of the problem reader. The specific decoding tendencies of the problem reader suggest what a program must do to be effective in changing this student's behavior.

The problem reader makes frequent word-identification errors. The student makes a higher percentage of mistakes when reading connected sentences than when reading words in word lists. Often, the student can read words correctly in word lists but then misidentifies the same words when they are embedded in connected sentences.

The specific mistakes the reader makes include word omissions, word additions, and confusion of high-frequency words, such as **what** and **that, of** and **for, and** and **the.** The student also reads synonyms (saying "pretty" for **beautiful**). The student often guesses at words, basing the guess on the word's beginning or ending. And the student is consistently inconsistent, making a mistake on one word in a sentence and then making a different mistake when rereading the sentence.

The student doesn't seem to understand the relationship between the arrangement of letters in a word and the pronunciation of the word. Often, the student is confused about the "word meaning" (a fact suggested by "synonym reading," "opposite reading," and word guessing). The strategy seems to be based on rules the student has been taught. The problem reader follows such advice as: "Look at the beginning of the word and take a guess," "Think of what the word might mean," and "Look at the general shape of the word." The result is a complicated strategy that is often backwards: The student seems to think that to read a word, one must first "understand" the word and then select the spoken word that corresponds to that understanding.

Although the problem reader may use a strategy that is "meaning based," the reader is often preempted from comprehending passages. The reason is that the student doesn't read a passage with the degree of accuracy needed to understand what the passage actually says. (Omitting the word **not** from one sentence changes the meaning dramatically.)

Furthermore, the student's reading rate is often inadequate, making it difficult for the student to remember the various details of the passage, even if they were decoded accurately. Often, the problem reader doesn't have an effective comprehension strategy because the student's poor decoding and slow rate don't make the material sensible.

Finally, the poor reader is not a highly motivated student. For this student, reading has been punishing. The student often professes indifference: "I don't care if I can read or not." But the student's behavior gives strong suggestions that the student cares a great deal.

The student's ineffective reading strategies and negative attitudes about reading become more ingrained as the reader gets older. To overcome them requires a very careful program, one that systematically replaces the strategies with new ones and that provides lots and lots of practice.

Initial relearning may be very slow and require a great deal of repetition. For a seventh grader—who chronically confuses **a** and **the**—to read words at 98 percent accuracy when they appear in passages, the student may have to read these words more than 800 times when they appear in sentences. Furthermore, the student must receive feedback. The only way to provide the necessary practice and feedback is through a presentation format that requires lots of oral reading. Until the 800 practice trials are provided, the high rate of accuracy will not occur.

Decoding Procedures

The procedures that are used in the program derive directly from the difficulties that students have with particular tasks. Based on the problems, we can identify two major levels of difficulty. The less difficult level is reading isolated words. The more difficult level is reading words that are in a connected sentence context.

Isolated words are easier because they do not prompt the student to use inappropriate guessing strategies that the student applies when reading connected sentences. When the student reads word lists, therefore, the student is not as likely to guess on the basis of the order of the preceding words, or on the basis of images that are prompted by preceding words. Not all word lists are the same level of difficulty.

Less difficult lists require reading words that have similar parts. More difficult lists require reading words that do not have similar parts. This type of list is sometimes called a "mixed list" because all types of words appear in it.

Reading words in connected sentences is more difficult than reading words in isolation. The task of reading a particular passage can be made relatively more difficult or less difficult.

Passage reading is less difficult if the student has read the passage and received feedback on all errors.

Passage reading is more difficult if the student is reading the passage for the first time.

Lessons in the Decoding programs are designed to give students practice that leads them to become stronger in what is easier for them to do and that gives them progressive practice in the more difficult reading endeavors. The lessons do this while remaining within the skill limits of the student, which means that an appropriately placed student will not be overwhelmed with difficult tasks or bored by tasks that are too easy.

Each lesson presents words in isolation and gives students practice with easier lists and more difficult lists. When new words are introduced, they often appear in lists of words that have similar parts. In later lessons, these same words appear in mixed lists where the

students must rely more on the decoding skills taught earlier. Except for the early lessons in Level A, all Decoding lessons provide students practice with reading familiar words in sentence contexts.

The procedures require the students to read sentences or passages and then reread them. In Levels B1, B2, and C, students keep a record of their performance on the individual timed reading, called an Individual Reading Checkout. Their improved performance on timed reading provides students with evidence of their ability to retain and apply the decoding skills they have been taught. Students who read more fluently have better reading comprehension because what they read is more like natural speech.

The structure of the lessons addresses skill deficiencies directly but positively, in a manner that provides the type of practice students need to relearn fundamental strategies and to learn new skills. The teaching is designed so that it does not overwhelm students with material or rules that result in a high rate of errors.

The Problems

An effective corrective reading program must address the specific needs of the problem reader.

1 The learner must learn to look at the order of letters in a word and learn that this order suggests the general pronunciation of the word. Furthermore, the student must learn that the game is simple: First figure out how the letters suggest to *say* the word. Then see if the word you say is one that you recognize, one that has meaning. (Note that this strategy is basically the opposite of the one the typical problem reader uses.)

2 The problem reader must receive practice in reading connected sentences that are composed of words that have been taught in isolation. Merely because the student reads words in lists does not imply transfer to written sentences.

3 An effective corrective reading program provides a great deal of daily fluency practice. The demands for fluency become greater as students move through the strand. In **Decoding A** there is much more emphasis on accuracy than fluency. By **Decoding C,** students are expected to read fluently, accurately, and with expression.

4 The student must receive strong reinforcement for working on reading because the task is very difficult and frustrating for the student. The student has received a great deal of evidence that reading is a puzzle that can't seem to be solved.

5 Finally, the student must receive practice in reading a variety of passages. If the student practices reading only narrative passages, the student will not "automatically" transfer the reading skills to textbooks, articles, or other forms of expository writing. Therefore, different styles must be introduced.

The Solutions

SRA's **Corrective Reading** Decoding programs are successful with problem readers because they provide the careful integration, the practice, and the management details that the problem reader needs to succeed.

The student receives daily practice in oral reading, with immediate feedback. (Only through oral reading can we discover what the student is actually reading.)

The student reads word lists with information about how to pronounce various letter combinations, such as **th** and **or.** The student also reads sentences and passages composed of words that have been taught. The sentences and passages are designed so that they are relatively easy if the student approaches words as entities that are to be analyzed according to the arrangement of letters, but difficult if the student guesses on the basis of the context or syntax of the sentence. (The sentences are designed so that guesses often lead to an incorrect identification of the word.)

Together, the Mastery Tests and checkouts in the series assure that the student observes progress in reading rate and reading accuracy. Students become increasingly motivated by their progress in timed reading, as their records show improvement in reading rate and accuracy.

Stories and story-comprehension activities assure that students attend to the content of what they read. Initially in the Decoding series, the comprehension activities are deliberately separated from the decoding activities so that the student's misconceptions about reading are not exaggerated. The comprehension activities, however, show the student that what is read is to be understood. When students progress through the series, reading longer selections, they answer comprehension questions presented before, during, and after the selections. Comprehension items also appear in the Workbook.

Students practice using the vocabulary of instruction. Decoding B1 and **B2** provide students with a great deal of instruction and practice in attending to details of directions (something the typical poor reader is poor at doing), such as *front, back, middle, end, row, column, first, next, last, beginning,* and *end*.

Finally, the series addresses the problem reader's poor self-image. The series is designed so the student can succeed in real reading tasks. Furthermore, a point system that is based on realistic performance goals assures that the reader who tries will succeed and will receive reinforcement for improved performance.

In summary, the series uses a two-pronged approach. Each level teaches effective reading skills to replace the student's ineffective approach to reading. Each level also contains an effective management system that turns students on to reading. This turn-on is not achieved by "seducing" the reader with entertaining topics, but by rewarding the reader for steady improvement in reading performance. The approach WORKS.