


Gear Up!TM

Reading Research Base

Table of Contents

<i>Differentiated Instruction</i>	1
<i>Paired Fiction and Nonfiction Text</i>	2
<i>Comprehensive Lesson Plans</i>	3
<i>Engaging Leveled Student Books</i>	4
<i>References</i>	5-6



Gear Up![™] is based on sound pedagogy. As it was developed, care was taken to integrate both research and documentation to effectiveness of

- differentiated instruction
- paired fiction and nonfiction instruction
- comprehensive lesson plans incorporating the Five Essential Elements of Reading, NRP 2000
- engaging leveled student books

Differentiated Instruction

Wright Group has been known for a differentiated approach to literacy instruction. Differentiated instruction is a teaching philosophy designed to meet the diverse needs of all students in the classroom. It is based on the premise that teachers should adapt instruction to student differences, ensuring that struggling and advanced learners, students with varied cultural heritages, and children with different background experiences all learn to the best of their individual potential.

Key principles of a differentiated classroom:

- The teacher is clear about what matters in subject matter.
- The teacher understands, appreciates, and builds upon student differences.
- Assessment and instruction are inseparable.
- The teacher adjusts content, process, and product in response to student readiness, interests, and learning profile.
- All students participate in respectful work.
- Students and teachers are collaborators in learning.
- Goals of a differentiated classroom are maximum growth and individual success.
- Flexibility is the hallmark of a differentiated classroom.

(Tomlinson, 1999)

Gear Up! guided reading makes differentiation possible by providing text with gradually increasing stages of difficulty and explicit lesson plans for each title. Teachers assess and group students according to their reading ability, ranging from early emergent to fluency stages. Similar needs are addressed in these groups while focusing on specific strategies appropriate for the instructional levels.

Paired Fiction and Nonfiction Text

Educators understand that both fiction and nonfiction are essential to improving student reading performance in the classroom and on standardized tests. *Gear Up!* supports this instructional goal by providing paired fiction and nonfiction books for guided reading on the same topic and same level. Teachers are provided with opportunities for teaching and comparing these genres.

Using paired text—fiction and nonfiction texts on the same topic (also known as twin texts) —is an effective way of improving reading instruction. This pairing is uniquely suited to scaffolding and extending students' comprehension (Camp, 2000). Background knowledge, vocabulary, and motivation are all intrinsic to reading achievement. Evidence indicates that comprehension is directly affected by students' degree of background knowledge, vocabulary, and motivation (Block & Pressley, 2002; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Soalt, 2005).

Background Knowledge—Background knowledge must not only be activated, but also supplied for many readers. This is especially true of English Language Learners (ELL) and urban students with limited experiences. *Gear Up!* addresses this instructional concern by including student text for reading instruction with both fiction and nonfiction titles on the same topic and on the same reading level.

Vocabulary—In order for vocabulary to have an effect on comprehension, students need to explore a new word in a variety of contexts (McKeown & Beck, 2002; Mezynski, 1983; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). Multiple context exposure also allows for synonymous words to be introduced, which deepens comprehension and enhances students' vocabulary. *Gear Up!* provides students with the opportunity to encounter new words in nonfiction and encounter them again in a related fictional text.

Motivation—The more motivated students are to read a particular text, the more likely they are to attempt to understand the text's meaning (Guthrie, 2003). Some students prefer to read informational text, and some prefer to read a fictional text (Caswell & Duke, 1998; Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003). Paired texts afford the opportunity for students to explore a topic in their favored genre and then be motivated to pursue the same topic in a less favored genre. *Gear Up!* paired texts have the potential to bridge interest in the two genres, resulting in more diverse readers.

Fiction has been celebrated for its capacity to illuminate human identity and feelings, while informational text has been recognized for its ability to provide knowledge of the natural and social world (Duke, 2000; Weinstein, 2003). When teachers focus these two very different lenses on the same topic, they offer a more holistic view of a given subject and provide a wider range of potential hooks or entry points for student engagement. (Source: Data from Soalt, Jennifer, 2005)





Comprehensive Lesson Plans

Distinctive features of the explicit *Gear Up!* guided reading lesson plan include

- alignment to the *Five Essential Elements of Reading*, NRP 2000
- scaffolded instruction
- diverse learner support

Five Essential Elements of Reading—Visible, explicit lessons for teaching the *Five Essential Elements of Reading* (NRP 2000) are included in the *Gear Up!* lesson plans and are identifiable with these icons throughout the lesson:

1. phonemic awareness
2. phonics
3. fluency
4. vocabulary
5. comprehension

Skills taught within the five elements provide the basis for sound curriculum decisions and instructional approaches (CIERA 2001). These essential areas of reading instruction are integral to the *Gear Up!* guided reading program. Professional development is embedded as teachers learn how to specifically address the five elements and include these instructional strategies in their literacy instruction.

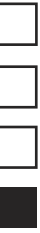
Scaffolded Instruction—Wright Group’s guided reading lessons provide a means of scaffolding instruction by adjusting the support given to students as they develop as readers. Teachers are provided with appropriate instructional skills and strategies including the Five Essential Elements throughout the three parts of the lesson plan:

1. before reading, where background knowledge is activated and the story introduced
2. during reading, where reading is focused and strategies are practiced
3. after reading, where strategies are reviewed and comprehension instruction occurs

Diverse Learners—Student diversity and closing the achievement gap continue to be a challenge in education. *Gear Up!* is designed to meet the needs of a diverse population of beginning readers, including students who lack certain life and literacy experience, or have limited knowledge of the English language. Our lesson plans make vocabulary and concept development accessible to all students through the use of

- gradually leveled books
- supportive language structures
- adaptable lesson plans
- ELL teaching ideas

In this program students have many opportunities to read selections with engaging, supportive illustrations. By teaching reading in meaningful contexts, the *Gear Up!* program provides all students with a framework for building basic understandings in their acquisition of literacy. Meeting the skills and reading needs of all students, regardless of their learning abilities, is of great importance in our schools; (Tabors and Snow, 2001; Vellutino and Scanlon, 2001; Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998; and Braunger and Lewis, 1997).



Engaging Leveled Student Books

The heart of differentiated instruction is leveled text. Wright Group books are widely used to differentiate instruction both in traditional guided reading sessions and in basal-based classrooms, and to provide engaging books at appropriate reading levels.

Engaging Books—High-interest topics and vivid illustrations coupled with purposeful text construction hold the attention of readers during guided reading instruction. Students often choose to read these books multiple times. Recurring characters in many of the stories motivate students to read additional books about these characters. Thirteen new titles have been added to the *Gear Up!* collection by guided reading author Joy Cowley. The nonfiction texts have unique access features preparing students for understanding science and social studies content area textbooks. *Gear Up!* combines the nonfiction and fiction texts on the same topic, which motivates students to learn and to compare the different genres.

Leveled Student Books—*Gear Up!* comprises a systematically organized collection of 240 carefully leveled readers. These books span a range of guided reading levels from Kindergarten through Grade 3 or early emergent through fluency levels. The books have been specifically designed to help students learn and practice the skills appropriate for each stage of reading development. Research supports the importance of placing students at their appropriate instructional levels in guided reading (Brown, 1999/00; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Fountas & Pinnell 1996).

Leveling criteria for each level includes

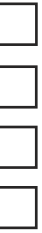
- language structure and vocabulary
- complexity of the concepts
- text support provided by illustrations and text access features
- size and placement of print on the page
- length of text

Wright Group leveled texts are designed to provide appropriate ratios of high-frequency, decodable, and content words. This balance is particularly important at the early levels to ensure that students are supported in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary development.

Students come into classrooms with a wide range of educational needs, and teachers have varying backgrounds in delivering effective reading instruction. The needs of both students and teachers were taken into consideration in the development of *Gear Up!* guided reading. This program has been developed on a sound research base and provides differentiated instruction using engaging paired fiction and nonfiction leveled text supported with explicit teacher lesson plans for each title.

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