

Choosing a Beginning Reading Program

SRA offers alternative **Direct Instruction** programs to teach beginning reading to children in Grades K-2: *Reading Mastery*, *Horizons*, *Reading Mastery Plus*, and *Journeys*. Although these programs are different in how skills are sequenced, all share proven features of program design that have made **Direct Instruction** highly effective:

- **Step-by-step instruction.** New concepts and skills are taught by the teacher in small steps to ensure success the **first time** something is presented – thus avoiding time-consuming and repetitious reteaching.
- **Practice to mastery.** Students have ample opportunity to practice all concepts and skills so they generalize and apply the strategies they are learning. This emphasis on mastery – a concept unique to Direct Instruction – helps students acquire new information faster and allows them to develop efficient strategies for learning.
- **On-going assessment.** Students' skill level is determined with entry-level assessment prior to instruction. Frequent, in-program mastery tests allow for continuous monitoring of student progress. Because this on-going assessment is closely linked to instruction and curriculum activities, teachers are able to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction, determine whether students are making adequate progress, and identify students at risk of difficulty and in need of specialized instruction.

There are two groups of programs: **Reading programs** (*Reading Mastery* and *Horizons*), and **Reading/Language Arts programs** (*Reading Mastery Plus* and *Journeys*).

- **Reading Programs**

To make very significant gains in student achievement, educators across the country begin in Grades Pre-K or K with intensive reading and language instruction. In implementing **Direct Instruction Reading** programs, the reading instruction should be supported with early language instruction, as found in *Language for Learning*. Then, students move to either *Language for Thinking or Reasoning and Writing*.

The advantage of using these **Direct Instruction Reading** programs is that they easily can be adjusted to meet the needs of better readers.

Reading Mastery (Grades K-6) has helped thousands of children develop into fluent, independent readers for more than 30 years. The specific instructional techniques and the program as a whole have proven superior in extensive research involving students of all ability levels. Because of its special orthography, *Reading Mastery* requires fewer entry skills: children can enter the program with no reading skills and still be successful. It is particularly helpful at accelerating reading achievement of lower-performing beginning readers when used in Grade K, and works well even with Pre-K children.

Horizons (Grades K-4) is an all-new program for beginning readers developed by Siegfried “Zig” Engelmann. Lessons developed over six years of classroom testing provide solid, systematic instruction using proven **Direct Instruction** techniques, updated with current research on beginning reading. Unlike *Reading Mastery*, *Horizons* uses standard print conventions and only three orthographic prompts. This creates a need for a different sequence of beginning skills. For children who have been taught letter names, the program is very effective, as *Horizons* teaches a greater number of words and a broader range of skills but requires that children be somewhat familiar with letter names.

- **Reading/Language Arts Programs**

Journeys and *Reading Mastery Plus* carefully combine language material from the *Language for Learning* and *Reasoning and Writing* programs with reading instruction from *Horizons* or *Reading Mastery*. Both *Journeys* and *Reading Mastery Plus* support reading instruction with oral language instruction and provide expanded opportunities for writing and practice of related language arts skills.

The advantage of using the integrated **Direct Instruction Reading/Language Arts** programs is that they are more comprehensive and require less instructional time than is needed to cover the content of separate reading and language programs. The price of this advantage is that children do not acquire as many decoding and comprehension skills in Grades K-1 as children who begin *Reading Mastery* in Grade K.

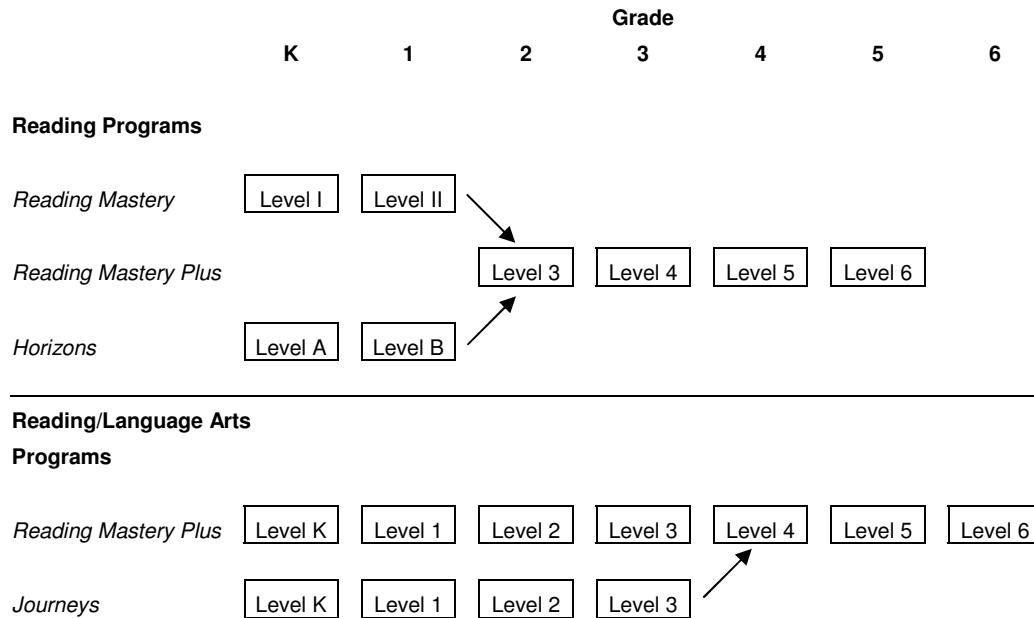
- The Level K programs begin with lessons adapted from *Language for Learning*.
- The Grade K programs introduce the alphabet and letter names.
- In Grades K-1, language is taught daily.
- In Grade 2, language is taught approximately once each week.

Journeys (Grades K-3) uses the traditional alphabet and capital letters from the beginning. Special prompts, used to minimize confusion between letter sounds, are faded throughout Levels 1-2 as children learn spelling patterns. Children read unprompted stories in Level 1 and most of Level 2.

Reading Mastery Plus (Grades K-6) uses the special alphabet found in *Reading Mastery* to minimize confusion between letter sounds. Capital letters and traditional orthography are introduced in stories in Level 2.

Developmental Reading Sequence

This chart shows the sequence of instruction across grade levels for each program. The sequence assumes that children begin reading instruction in Grade K. For the first year of implementation, the program level used in a given grade will depend on the children's skill level, as determined by placement tests.



Reading Mastery, *Horizons*, *Journeys*, and *Reading Mastery Plus* are different in specific details, not their overall capacity to teach children to read. Each program develops reading skills and strategies through systematic, small steps that make it possible for all children to learn and learn in a timely manner.

To determine which program will work best in your school, contact your local SRA sales representative at 1-888-SRA-4543. Together you will discuss:

- The academic focus of your Grade K classroom
- The amount of instructional time devoted to reading and language content
- The academic goals and expected outcomes
- The way specific student needs are addressed in each program