

**Frequently Asked Questions - Direct Instruction Programs  
The Questions Asked and Answered by our Best DI Sales Reps**

*See also, Frequently Asked Questions, Reading Mastery, at [www.sraonline.com](http://www.sraonline.com). Also a promotional piece, R80000681*

**Why haven't the Reading Mastery stories changed in the new edition?**

With the new revision, we have done a lot of explaining about why the core stories do not change. This explanation references how the stories are constructed to ensure that

- students are practicing the words that have just moved into the story reading part of the lesson (sound-word-story)
- reviewing certain patterns and high frequency words often enough that mastery is maintained (the careful design of multiple planned exposures to new learning)
- the structure of the lesson ensures that the rate of introduction of material into passages and the review of mastered material is not the responsibility of the teacher

Other points:

- research-proven programs do not change dramatically over time because they don't have to
- teachers may want new stories because they have taught the program for several years, but the stories are new to the students

**What's the difference between Signature and Classic RM?**

Signature is the 2008 edition and when paired with the language arts and literature strand, can be used as a comprehensive core reading and language arts program. It's reading strand, at levels K and 1, is exactly the same as Classic I and II, © 2003

**In the Reading Mastery Signature program, will the students always be in the same reading and language level?**

Generally, yes. However, at the beginning of an implementation, students in remedial mode (say, second graders who can't read), may need the K level for reading and be able to "fast cycle" through that level and level 1, while beginning level 1 of the language strand. This is why the help of a consultant to look at placement, grouping and scheduling will be critical to the start-up of a new implementation.

**When and why to use the Transition Program in Signature Grade 1**

Not every student will have the fluency necessary to begin Signature Grade 2. Those students who can not pass the placement test for Signature Grade 2 (generally 20-25%) will need the transition program, which is a 35 lesson bridge between Levels 1 and 2. The Transition Program would also be a great summer school program for grade 1 students struggling in any reading program.

**I want Reading Mastery as intervention-should I buy Classic or Signatures?  
I only have about 40 minutes.**

The reading strand of Signature and the K and 1 level is identical to Classic I and II. Either choice would be fine. If the implementation is likely to expand to the upper levels of the program, Signature might be a better choice. Also, because it has a newer copyright, the consumable pieces will be available for a longer period of time.

**Do students have a hard time transitioning from the orthography to regular text?**  
No, this is a function of how much they are depending on the special orthography to help them read. When the orthography fades in the program, they are always ready to move on and read outside the program. Students may use the special orthography when they write if they are heavily dependent on it, but this too, will disappear as it disappears in the program (half way through Classic II or Signature 1).

**If students have never been in Reading Mastery before and are asked to read “the cow on the road” for placement, are they going to be too confused by the orthography to get a correct placement?**

Students have been taking the placement test for years with the special print and have not had problems. Some teachers have re-typed the story and present it that way instead, but we have no data that this makes any difference in the placement of the students.

**When do students get to read authentic literature?**

Reading Mastery Signature and Plus both have a set of literature selections for reading aloud and/or shared reading at the primary levels and a literature anthology selection at levels 2-5 (or 3-6 in Plus) after every 10<sup>th</sup> lesson. The new SRA Read Aloud program was designed to be used with students reading at the Signature K and 1 (Classic I and II) levels as well and includes a repeated reading of one trade book for every week of school with an emphasis on development of vocabulary listening comprehension.

**When should I use Reading Mastery instead of Corrective Reading?**

Corrective Reading can be used with any students in grades 3-high school who are reading 2 or more years below grade. At grade 3 other DI interventions that could be suggested would be Horizons Fast Track A/B and Reading Mastery Fast Cycle I/II. However, beyond grade three the recommendation would always be for the students to be in Corrective Reading as an intervention program because it accelerates progress to help close the reading gap, and Horizons and Reading Mastery would not appear age-appropriate to older students, unless they are cognitively impaired. Reading Mastery can be used with CI students throughout their school careers.

**How large can my groups be?**

The general rule is that the further behind a student is in reading, the smaller the intervention group size for reading should be. This is also true of younger students, (grades K and 1) who also benefit from small group instruction. Be careful when stating actual numbers, since teachers might use the excuse that

they have 9 students instead of 8 in a group for why the lessons aren't working out.

Generally, the recommended ceilings on group sizes are:

Reading Mastery K, 1 or Classic I/II

6 students for your most at-risk group, if possible; 10-12 otherwise

Reading Mastery Signature 2-5; Plus 3-6

Both may be done whole class, but when working with Tier 2 or 3 students, keep the group sizes smaller (10 or less, if possible).

**How long are the lessons, i.e., how much time to teach?**

Most DI program lesson times are 45 minutes, with the exception being Reading Mastery Signature 2-5 or Reading Mastery Plus, 2-6, where the reading lessons take 90 minutes (less time for smaller groups, 1 ¼ hours). The language strand lessons for Reading Mastery require an additional 45 minutes.

**How much training time do we need for teachers to get up and running?**

Minimally:

One day for Corrective Decoding

One day for Corrective Comprehension

Schools using new programs and are already using Direct Instruction can get by with less training, but their new teachers would still need the amount of training recommended above.

*Always recommend follow up in the form of model lessons and on-side coaching.*

**How flexible can the teachers be in teaching the program?**

The script should be followed, but the program can be added to with motivational language. Every time a student answers a question, teachers must make decisions about what to do next: praise a correct answer, correct a possible error, reconfirm the answer if the group seemed a little less than confident, etc. These decisions are not scripted.

**This looks boring to teach. What about my creativity?**

It's not if you put your creative self into "acting out" the lessons and you get a tingle watching students who might not have learned to read in the past, get it this time. The program is like the framework and foundation of a house: it's solid and sturdy. How you decorate your house...what siding and roof colors you choose, what landscaping you plant, pictures you put on your walls, etc...that's up to you. Give lots of praise, play motivational games to provide extra practice on the difficult new learning, act happy and surprised when exercises are done perfectly, etc.

### **Which programs can be used as a replacement core?**

Reading Mastery Signature and Reading Mastery Plus can be and are used as replacement core and core programs in many parts of the country. Corrective Reading, when both strands are used, could also be considered a replacement core.

### **Do we need to use the placement test, or can we use DIBELS scores?**

Always use the placement test. The DIBELS scores can tell you which students would benefit from an intensive intervention and also which level of the program to begin the testing, but they should not be used for placement.

### **Is there a correlation between DIBELS and placement in Reading Mastery or Corrective Reading?**

One DI implementation group, Educational Resources, Inc., has collected data on hundreds of students in Reading Mastery and this data shows that students working on grade level and at mastery in Reading Mastery Signature have 90% pass rates on the DIBELS subtests.

### **How effective is DI with ELL students?**

Intuitively, it seems that the consistent language of instruction, careful teaching scaffolding and lesson routines of DI programs would facilitate the learning of a non-English speaking student.

There is a growing body of research, dating back to the 80's, that points to DI as an effective method for teaching ELL students. A recent study was reported in the Learning Disability Quarterly, *Use of Evidence-Based, Small-Group Reading Instruction for English Language Learners in Elementary Grades: Secondary-Tier Intervention* (Debra Kamps, et al) Volume 30, Number 3, Summer 2007. This study showed strong effect sizes for primary ELL students receiving small group Tier 2 intervention with Direct Instruction.

The Baltimore Curriculum Project has a good summary of DI with ELL students at their web site.

[http://www.baltimorecp.org/docs/DI\\_ESL\\_Facts.pdf](http://www.baltimorecp.org/docs/DI_ESL_Facts.pdf)

### **How will this help them on the state test?**

Reading better is always the key for improved test scores. Both Reading Mastery and Corrective Reading have Test Preparation Blackline Masters specific to each level. These activities reinforce and extend the learning in the program with questions that mirror those often found on state tests.

### **Do you let one student hold up the entire group?**

No, while the program goal is mastery for every student, a student who clearly needs more repetition and practice than others in the group needs to be helped at another time in the day by having lessons pre-taught and reviewing lesson parts in which s/he was struggling. If possible, look for alternative placements in a more appropriate group.

**What do I do at the end of the year as far as placement for the following year?**

Note the last mastery test or fluency check out given at which each group was scoring at or above 80% or passing. Back up ten lessons from that point when school begins and come forward.