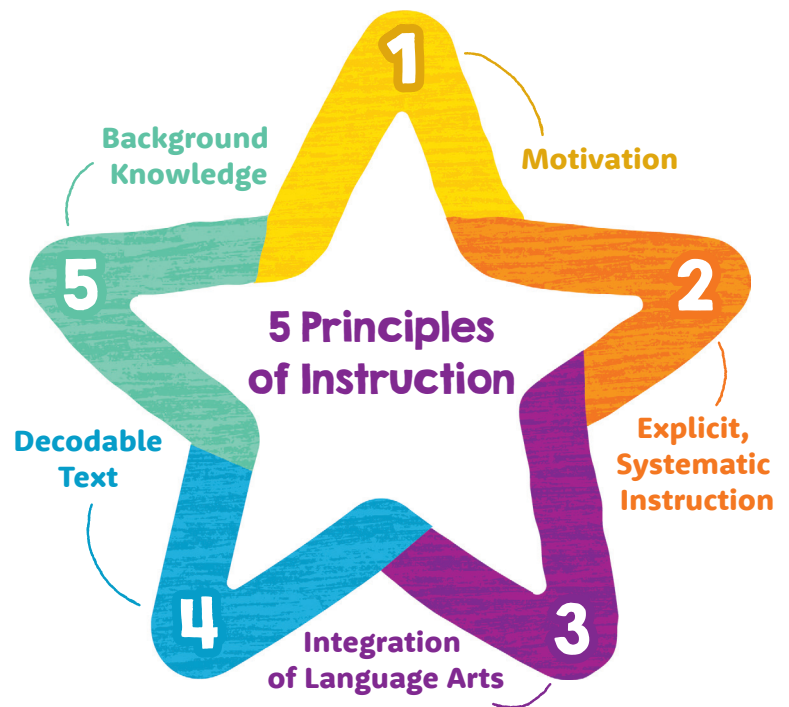


5 Principles of Instruction

The *Superkids Reading Program* is a comprehensive English language arts program for grades K–2. The program aligns with decades of scientific research and includes best practices for teaching reading, writing, speaking, and listening. *Superkids* is built on five evidence-based principles for teaching literacy in the primary grades.



1 Motivation

Motivation is a key factor in children's success in learning to read. The most unique and well-known feature of *The Superkids Reading Program* is the Superkids characters. They have delighted children for over 40 years and serve as the anchor of the instruction. Children meet this diverse group of characters in kindergarten and follow the Superkids through second grade. The Superkids' interests and experiences are universal, and children connect with them early on. Children often have so much fun reading about the Superkids that they don't realize they are learning critical skills along the way.

The engaging fiction and informational texts provided in the program also motivate children. By connecting reading to real-world experiences and encouraging exploration of a variety of topics, *Superkids* not only builds literacy skills but also nurtures an eagerness to learn new things.

In addition to the engaging stories and interesting facts they read, children acquire the tools they need to be successful readers. They are taught the decoding skills necessary to read the texts all by themselves. That success is highly motivating and further fuels children's desire to learn.

Explicit, Systematic Instruction

Explicit and systematic instruction gives children a reliable way to learn. The systematic, explicit word work instruction in the program is thoughtfully and thoroughly designed so children learn to decode words with continuous practice until they reach automaticity and fluency. The sequence of instruction moves from the simple to the more complex at a developmentally appropriate pace and is backed by research and proven best practices.

Systematic and explicit instruction is not limited to word work. It is a core principle of the program and underpins the instruction in every strand. Carefully planned reading and writing instruction allows children to build knowledge, vocabulary, and writing skills cumulatively, over time.

A gradual release of responsibility model is applied in all strands of instruction, which includes the following steps:

- **Modeling (I do):** In this first step, the teacher shows children how to do the task, whether it is spelling a word, applying a phonics skill to decodable text, or turning and talking to a partner about a read-aloud.
- **Guided Practice (We do):** Here, the teacher and children practice the task together. This collaboration helps students apply the skills they learned during the modeling step.
- **Independent Practice (You do):** In this final step, children demonstrate mastery of the task on their own. The teacher observes and evaluates their progress, providing feedback and support when appropriate.

Integration of Language Arts

Reading is most effectively taught when integrated with all the language arts. *Superkids* seamlessly integrates word work, reading, and writing instruction, as well as speaking and listening.

- During word work instruction, children learn patterns and rules to read and spell words accurately. They analyze the structure of words and sentences so they can break them down into their meaningful parts. And they learn to apply all of this to reading and writing throughout a unit and across the year.
- Word work instruction is not just integrated, it engages multiple sensory systems. Whenever children learn a sound-spelling pattern, they see it, hear it, say it, and write it. Thus, auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic pathways are applied and used to reinforce one another. This multimodal technique helps all children master key skills because they get repeated exposures to important concepts and multiple ways to practice them.
- During reading instruction, children apply their new word work skills to read grade-level decodable texts. They also listen to complex, above grade-level read-alouds, which are critical for stimulating and building language comprehension. All student texts align to a “Big Topic,” around which students build knowledge. Children read, talk, and write about texts. They learn complex vocabulary and are encouraged to use that vocabulary in their own reading, writing, and speech.
- During writing instruction, children integrate word work skills with the knowledge they have gained. After listening to, reading, and discussing texts on the Big Topics, they write increasingly complex compositions. At the end of each Big Topic, the writing unit focuses on a culminating task, called a Big Topic Project. Children demonstrate what they’ve learned by completing a project that requires them to read, write, and speak about the Big Topic.

4 Decodable Text

Phonetically controlled vocabulary ensures success, enabling children to really read, not guess. Research validates that children learn to read most efficiently when they can apply taught letter-sounds to phonetically controlled, or decodable, texts. As children are mastering the alphabetic code, limiting the words they read to those that contain sounds they have learned ensures success. The phonetically controlled vocabulary in the program's texts allows children to build the habit of decoding, rather than making guesses, until they can read automatically. The success children experience builds their skills and confidence so they can readily apply the decoding principle to increasingly complex text. The decoding habit will serve them throughout their lives. It is the same technique expert readers use when they meet unknown words.

Superkids texts are cumulatively decodable. As children learn more letter-sound patterns and spelling rules, words with those elements are included in the text. As a result, text gets more complex as children grow as readers. While student texts are decodable, they are also engaging, complex, and grade-level appropriate. They help build a “staircase of complexity” that children need to become proficient readers and remain on track for success.

5 Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is essential to making meaning from text, and building knowledge must be a focus of early reading instruction. Background knowledge plays an important role in the reading process, providing a scaffold that supports language comprehension and the understanding of a text. Research tells us the more we know about a subject, the easier it is to read about it with understanding. A goal of *Superkids* instruction is to help children in each grade build knowledge around common and relevant themes called Big Topics. Children spend several weeks listening to and reading multiple texts that align with each Big Topic. Texts are coordinated to give children both breadth and depth of knowledge about the Big Topic. Children learn sophisticated vocabulary and engage in rich, relevant discussions. They read closely and answer text-based questions that ask them to cite evidence. They write about what they read, both formally and informally.

At the end of a Big Topic, children are asked to demonstrate this knowledge via a Big Topic Project. Students must engage their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills to complete these culminating tasks, which serve as an important summative assessment of what children have learned.

