3 Steps to Improving Foundational Reading Skills and Reading Comprehension

1. Assess Critical Foundational Reading Skills
2. Formulate the Instructional and RTI Strategies
3. Develop Skills and Provide Accommodations

1. Assess Critical Foundational Reading Skills
The Importance of Foundational Skills for Reading Development

Reading is a complex skill that can break down in a number of ways, inhibiting students' growth toward becoming proficient readers. Researchers identified five foundational skills that build upon one another contributing to proficient reading comprehension. If left unaddressed, weaknesses in any one of these five skills will slow students' growth and may prevent students from ever catching up with their peers.

When teachers know which of the skills their students are struggling with, teachers can plan an effective individual learning path and administer a targeted intervention that will help students improve faster.

Reading Skills	Skill Description
WORD RECOGNITION & DECODING (PHONICS)	*Sight word recognition* concerns the ability to accurately and efficiently recognize known words in printed text. *Phonological decoding (phonics)* is the process of linking letters with their sounds to read new words. Both are needed to support vocabulary acquisition and fluent reading. <u>Low accuracy or low automaticity of decoding is the primary symptom of reading disability or dyslexia.</u>
VOCABULARY	*Vocabulary* knowledge helps derive the meaning of words and their associations to related words ("forest" to "trees"). Some estimates indicate that successful reading comprehension requires knowing the meaning of 95-98 percent of the words in text; thus, students with poor knowledge of grade-level vocabulary will struggle to understand the grade-level content.
MORPHOLOGY	*Morphology* involves the ability to identify and use prefixes, suffixes, and roots to recognize words, comprehend sentences, and learn the meaning of new words. Morphology is important for developing new vocabulary and differentiating nuances in a word's meaning. Below grade-level performance could indicate poor vocabulary knowledge and/or a lack of understanding of how words are constructed.
SENTENCE PROCESSING	Skilled *Sentence Processing* is the ability to comprehend sentences of varying complexity using cues such as temporal (before, second), referential (him, her, this, that), relational (less than, larger than), and causal (because, therefore) connectors and conjunctions. The ability to understand the nuanced meaning of sentences is important for grasping the overall meaning of text. Lower sentence processing skill can be due to weaknesses in the preceding skills and/or a lack of familiarity with cues.
READING EFFICIENCY	*Reading Efficiency* concerns the ability to silently read text accurately and at an appropriate rate for understanding. Below grade performance in fluency indicates weaknesses in one or more of the preceding foundational skills and/or a lack of stamina for sustained silent reading.
READING COMPREHENSION	*Reading Comprehension* is the ability to understand text by building an accurate mental model. This skill includes understanding the literal meaning, as well as making cross sentence or passage inferences. Below grade level performance indicates that the student is lacking in one or more foundational reading skills.

[ReadReady™](#) **assessment from ETS (distributed by [Capti](#)) measures all 6 key reading skills.**

2. Formulate the Instructional and RTI Strategy
Focusing instructional activities on the Weakest Skills

Once teachers know their students' strengths and weaknesses, including the level of proficiency in specific reading skills, teachers can formulate a focused instructional or RTI Plan with measurable goals.

The following table provides general recommendations on the instructional activities that can help develop each of the reading skills more effectively.

Reading Skills	General Recommendations
WORD RECOGNITION & DECODING	Students should read words and listen to a fluent reader or text-to-speech reading the words aloud. This can help students practice and check their decoding of unknown words. With repetition, students will learn to recognize familiar words on sight.
VOCABULARY	Students should underline and look up all unknown words in a passage. Teachers should share word lists with students to introduce new and challenging vocabulary prior to reading. Teachers should have students do vocabulary building exercises or word games.
MORPHOLOGY	Students first need direct instruction of morphemes in the form of prefixes, suffixes, and base words, followed by direct instruction of affixes and roots words, and should practice combining and segmenting various parts of words, and identifying correct morphological variants within sentences.
SENTENCE PROCESSING	Students should highlight prepositions, conjunctions, and sentence connectors. Students should add notes to the parts of the text that are important or difficult to understand.
READING EFFICIENCY	Students should read along with a proficient reader silently or aloud with the audio, which will help them to identify unknown words, promote automaticity, and help build reading stamina. Text to speech can provide models of fluent reading; with the volume off, students should practice reading faster by following the cursor.
READING COMPREHENSION	When the print is a barrier, comprehension and knowledge can still be built by listening. It is important to provide text to speech and accommodations to students so that they can keep up with subject area content learning, while they practice their print reading skills.

Based on the _ReadReady_™ results, Capti assigns students to the appropriate RTI Tier and provides personalized activity recommendations for instructional and RTI planning (captivoice.com/readready).

3. Develop Skills and Provide Accommodations
Using Technology to Improve Reading

Teachers can implement low-tech approaches to help students improve their reading skills. But Education Technology helps accommodate students, track progress, and improve reading faster.

Teachers can use various instructional technology products that provide proprietary curricula and help students develop their reading comprehension with exercises. Unfortunately, most of these products:

1) Are **not** able to assess all six key reading skills
2) Do **not** allow focusing instruction on the specific skills
3) Carry curricula that are of **little** interest to students
4) Do **not** provide accommodations in content areas
5) Take time and focus **away** from content areas

To help students build their foundational reading skills, teachers need to personalize and differentiate instruction, while also providing accommodations and scaffolding to meet students where they are.

Teachers can use a variety of technology products to provide accommodations and help students access any texts they need to read in content areas. Unfortunately, most of these products:

1) Do **not** help assess students' reading skills
2) Do **not** help students develop their reading skills
3) Do **not** connect accommodations with skill building

Capti Voice is unique in that it combines the capabilities of reading assessment, reading development, and reading accommodations products. Capti Voice empowers teachers to:

1) Find out why students are struggling to read by assessing all **six** key reading skills
2) Focus on the weakest foundational skills with personalized actionable recommendations
3) Provide accommodations and scaffolding to students at **any** reading proficiency level
4) Utilize text to speech and other literacy tools to develop **any** reading skill on **any** content

Capti Voice is the official distributor of the **_ReadReady_™** assessment by ETS. The assessment:

1) Assesses 6 key reading skills
2) Is appropriate for Grades 3-10
3) Takes a total of 45-80 minutes
4) Has 6 subtests at 3 levels of difficulty
5) Is normed across grades and levels

For more information   **email: info@captivoice.com**   **or call: 888-533-7884**