



iLIT INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL RESEARCH BASIS

Background

Without question, educators know a great deal about how to develop reading ability in young children. As a result of scientifically based research in reading, the classroom teaching of this subject has changed significantly in the primary grades. Even so, many students still struggle by grade 3, and approximately 75 percent of those students remain struggling readers in grade 9 (Joftus, 2002).

The need for effective instruction in this area is underscored by current statistics the National Assessment of Education Program. In 2013, the percentage of 4th-grade students performing at or above the Basic achievement level (68 percent) was not measurably different from the percentage in 2011 but was higher than the percentage in 1992 (62 percent). A higher percentage of 4th-grade students performed at or above the Proficient achievement level in 2013 (35 percent) than in 2011 (34 percent) and 1992 (29 percent). Among 8th-grade students, the percentage performing at or above Basic in 2013 (78 percent) was higher than in 2011 (76 percent) and 1992 (69 percent). A higher percentage of 8th-grade students performed at or above Proficient in 2013 (36 percent) than in 2011 (34 percent) and 1992 (29 percent). Among 12th-grade students, the percentage performing at or above Basic (74 percent) in 2009 was not significantly different from the percentage in 2005 but was lower than the percentage in 1992 (80 percent). The percentage of 12th-graders performing at or above Proficient was higher in 2009 (38 percent) than in 2005 (35 percent) but was not significantly different from the percentage in 1992.

While there are remedial programs designed to help struggling readers, the majority of these programs focus only on the most low-level skills (Joftus, 2002). However, a study done by researchers at Johns Hopkins University suggests that only a very small percentage of students (five to 10 percent) enter 9th grade testing at the 2nd- or 3rd-grade level, and, hence, still need to learn elementary reading skills (Joftus, 2002).

Introduction to iLit Instructional Model

iLit is a core intervention reading course designed for students who are two or more years below grade level in reading, grades 4 - 10. The instructional needs of English language learners are also directly addressed through this course. The program is designed to build and strengthen the overall reading proficiency of these students by immersing them in a series of double- period courses that emphasize effective, research-based strategies shown to improve overall reading abilities. Additionally, iLit provides students with transferable skills that can be used and applied beyond the classroom. Students do enough work and receive enough solid instruction to earn graduation credit for the course.

iLit is aligned with the spirit and intention of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards. The instruction closes the gaps in order to place students in the grade-level appropriate English Language Arts classroom. In addition, the iLit curriculum is aligned with the report, Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy (Snow & Biancarosa, 2004; see appendix A). Reading Next, a report from the Carnegie Corporation that introduces guidelines for improving literacy among middle and high school students, is a nationally recognized compendium of research for adolescent literacy instruction.

Although comprehension is a complex and multi-faceted cognitive process, the RAND Reading Study Group distilled its essence by stating that it is, “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language,” (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p. 11). Based on the construction-integration model (Kintsch, 1994, p. 321), students must be able to create appropriate mental images of the texts they have read. These images should not be merely literal interpretations, but should be formed using active inferencing, prior knowledge, and other higher-level comprehension processes. All iLit course components are designed to work together to build and strengthen students’ implicit and explicit comprehension. In addition, reading comprehension instruction is integrated with content learning, including reading and writing for both fiction and nonfiction texts.

iLit is designed to produce self-regulated readers who are able to take an active role in recognizing and resolving issues that arise while reading a text (Almasi, 1996; Gourgey, 2001). Research has shown that this type of self-monitoring can be promoted through peer discussions, peer tutoring, and cooperative activities in which students grapple with the uses and meanings of different reading strategies (Klinger & Vaughn, 1996; Klinger, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1998; Palinscar & Brown, 1984). In addition, peer interaction has shown to provide opportunities for metacognitive interactions and modeling (Palinscar, David, Winn, & Steven, 1991).

iLit follows the research-based perspective that effective reading comprehension relies on a combination of motivation, the ability to capably apply comprehension strategies, conceptual knowledge, and social interaction among learners (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The program provides an instructional approach that effectively addresses these motivational, cognitive, conceptual, and social issues for each student.

For strategy instruction, iLit incorporates the six reading strategies identified by the National Reading Panel report (2000) as crucial for developing comprehension skills. These strategies are: (1) activating background knowledge, (2) student questioning, (3) searching for information, (4) summarizing, (5) organizing graphically, and (6) learning story structure for literary materials. Considering the aforementioned and other relevant research, the iLit course was designed around five main premises (below) that are supported by this research: active engagement and motivation, explicit modeling, vocabulary instruction, authentic reading and writing experiences, and differentiated instruction.

iLit—Introduction to the Five Main Premises

1. Motivation:

Based on a survey of research, Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Perencevich, Taboada, et al. (2004, p. 404), concluded that an, “engaged reader is intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn from text.” The effectiveness of reading instruction will be compromised unless students are motivated to read and engaged in the learning process (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Turner, 1995; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

For English language learners: Studies have shown that motivation to learn a new language and communicate with others is a strong predictor of success with a second language (Skehan, 1989 in

Gass & Selinker, 2001). iLit is designed to increase ELL motivation by utilizing students' background knowledge, language, and culture to shape instruction in order to help students understand and connect with the ideas, concepts, and language presented in class (Wong Fillmore, 1991; Nieto, 2003; Perez & Torres-Guzman, 1996).

2. Explicit Instruction and Modeling:

Teacher modeling is identified as an important component of comprehension instruction in the Reading Next report. The authors of this report describe modeling as, “the teacher reading texts aloud, making her own use of strategies and practices apparent to her students,” (Snow & Biancarosa, 2004, p. 14). Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker (2001) found that extensive teacher modeling was an important element in successful comprehension instruction. Likewise, Duke (2004) found that readers who struggle with comprehension benefit significantly from think-alouds.

For English language learners: Studies have shown that authentic, comprehensible instruction and scaffolding are necessary components for effective second language instruction (Krashen, 1982).

3. Vocabulary Instruction:

Research shows that direct vocabulary instruction significantly improves comprehension (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; LaFlamme, 1997) and writing (Tompkins, 2003). iLit incorporates research-based instructional components that promote vocabulary development. These include: (a) repeated and varied transactions with new words (Dole, Sloan, and Trathen, 1995; Rosenbaum, 2001; NICHD, 2001); (b) direct instruction: definitional and contextual (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; Stahl, 1999; Irvin, 1998; NICHD, 2001); and (c) morphological analysis (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, roots) (Biemiller, 2003; Irvin, 1998; Sousa, 2005).

For English language learners: Due to varied background experiences, English language learners often do not have a typical knowledge base (or life experience) to draw from when they are trying to attach meaning to new words. Such students need instructional programs that help them make connections between their language and experiences, and the ideas and concepts represented by the new language (Delpit, 1995; Wong Fillmore, 1991; Nieto, 2003; Perez & Torres-Guzman, 1998). iLit provides instructional support to help English language learners bridge this gap.

4. Authentic Reading & Writing Experiences:

Authentic reading experiences consist of interactions with actual books (e.g., stories, informational books, and poetry) in contrast to the reading of literature-based basal texts, which contain excerpts or abridged versions of actual books. Likewise, authentic writing experiences allow students to write in ways that are relevant and meaningful to their own lives, and for the purposes of a real audience. Research shows that reading and writing are mutually reinforcing (Fearn & Farnan, 2001), and the iLit program is designed to use each to strengthen the other.

For English language learners: English language learners need reading and writing experiences to allow them to express their own ideas, and to show them how to use language in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their lives (Rubin & Carlan, 2005). These students also need a program

that helps them learn the grammatical, morphological, and phonological aspects of the English language (VanPatten, 1993). iLit gives English language learners opportunities to read and write while also attending to the technical aspects of language.

5. Differentiated Monitoring & Instruction:

Differentiated classrooms are beneficial to a diverse group of students because they are, “responsive to students’ varying readiness levels, varying interests, and varying learning profiles,” (Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, 1998, p. 54). A position statement of the International Reading Association, “Making a Difference Means Making It Different,” also highlights the importance of differentiated instruction. This position statement, which provides a review of current research, concludes that effective reading programs must provide differentiated instruction. Likewise, Allington (2005, p. 3) states that, “Because children differ, no single text nor any single task can be appropriate for all children in a classroom—much less a grade level.”

For English language learners: Typical learning differences are compounded for English language learners, who also differ by country of origin, language, ethnicity, culture, family SES, access to prior formal schooling experiences, and consequent levels of proficiency in their first language and English (Corson, 1999; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000; Rubinstein-Avila, 2001). Because of the variety of variables that each English language learner brings to the classroom, these students must be taught in programs that attend to their individual differences (O’Byrne, 2001; Lucas & Wagner, 1999). iLit is designed to provide individualized instruction to meet the needs of every learner.

Research Details—Five Main Premises

1. Motivation:

What the research says: Motivation has a significant effect on the interest, purpose, and persistence with which a reader engages in a text (Butcher & Kintsch, 2003; Schallert & Martin, 2003). Research shows that students who are intrinsically motivated spend more time reading independently than those who are not (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Likewise, the amount of time spent reading is a significant predictor of reading comprehension achievement (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1998; Stanovich & Cunningham, 1993). Students must be equipped with both reading comprehension skills and the motivation to read in order to make satisfactory academic progress (Alvermann & Earle, 2003; Stipek, 2002).

Research has shown that certain instructional practices can significantly influence student motivation for reading (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001; Wigfield, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Stipek, 1996 & 2002). Also, reading frequently, and reading a broad range of texts (fiction and nonfiction), is highly correlated with reading achievement in middle school students (Kirsch, LaFontaine, McQueen, Mendelovits, & Monseur, 2002).

Research indicates that instructional programs can include components that measurably increase students’ motivation to read (Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Perencevich, Taboada, et al., 2004; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In one study, students who were given a choice in text selection performed higher

on several reading tasks than those who were not given a choice (Reynolds & Symons, 2001). Social and environmental instructional components shown to increase student motivation are: (1) opportunities for student choice, (2) collaboration and connection with other students, (3) opportunities for student-initiated questioning and self-direction, (4) acknowledgement of feelings, (5) the need to experience competence and success (6) learning goals, and (7) interesting texts (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, Nezlek, & Sheinman, 1981; Flink, Boggiano, & Barrett, 1990; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986; Guthrie, Wigfield, et al., 2004).

What iLit does:

iLit addresses the idea of both **independent** and **shared** motivation. Aspects of the course that foster motivation within these categories are listed below:

Independent Motivation

- Independent reading (choice)
- Classroom library via e-texts (availability, choice)

Shared Motivation

- Classroom conversation
- Work period (choice)

Independent Engagement and Motivation

Literacy instruction should include time to read independently every day. Reading becomes better with practice and, consequently, comprehending becomes better with more reading practice (Pressley, 2003; Rasinski, 2003). Research shows that adolescents need opportunities for sustained reading in order to improve their literacy skills and vocabulary (Brozo & Hargis, 2003). The leveled e-library provides a wide selection of texts chosen to appeal to the diverse needs and interests of iLit students. Books are also selected to complement the units of study in the iLit program. Research has documented that effective literacy instruction includes a wide variety of reading and writing activities and materials (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; Langer, 2001, New Jersey Reading Association, 2003; Ostrowski, 2000). Therefore, the iLit e-library is an integral component of iLit's systematic and thorough approach to learning.

Shared Motivation

Classroom conversations allow students to engage in mutual, thoughtful collaboration, exchanges, or construction of information and ideas. In addition, several studies by Webb (1989, 1991) found that verbalizing one's thoughts is critical to the process of learning. Slavin (1996) stated that appropriate group/learner collaboration includes interactions such as: (a) working jointly on problems, (b) critically (re)examining assumptions, (c) elaborating material for each other, and (d) engaging in mutual feedback and debate. Additionally, research has shown that social collaboration promotes deep conceptual insights and shifts in perspective, which lead to increases in student understanding and retention of concepts (Damon & Phelps, 1989; Slavin, 1996; Webb, 1989). One reason for this is that peer interactions often include more thoughtful questioning and problem solving, as well as more active student engagement (Lederman & Druger, 1985). iLit provides relevant opportunities for students to reap the benefits of peer-group conversations and

interactions. The iLit work period is designed to allow students the opportunity to work either individually or in small groups. Individual work may consist of personalized study plans in all aspects of language performance areas, independent reading strategy practice in a leveled text, listening to audio support, reading independently, revising or editing writing work through automated feedback and coaching tools, conferencing with the teacher, etc. Small-group instruction involves guided reading, guided writing, strategy lessons, and reading/writing conferences. Studies have shown that highly effective literacy teaching repertoires at the secondary level must contain a wide variety of differentiated reading and writing activities (Applebee & Langer, 2003; Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; Langer, 2001; Ostrowski, 2000). iLit work periods were designed to offer teachers a varied and flexible program of learning experiences that can be used to meet the individual and changing needs of students.

2. Explicit Instruction & Modeling:

What the research says:

One of the key instructional elements identified in the Reading Next report as critical to adolescent reading success is direct, explicit comprehension instruction. Research shows that reading strategies, and the ability to apply them in meaningful situations, can be acquired through instruction (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Pressley, 2000; Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick, & Kurita, 1989). Effective instruction is explicit and direct in explaining these strategies and the reasons to use them (Duffy, 2002; Pressley & McCormick, 1995).

Comprehension instruction should give students the skills to become proficient in transforming the surface code of text (exact wording) into idea units that contain meaning. As readers integrate their own knowledge and interpretation to the text base (which includes all meaning-making components of the text such as vocabulary, semantics, syntax, and genre), they should be able to “construct” mental representations of the text that are consistent with the author’s intent (Kintsch, 1988, 1992, 2005; Kinsch & Bowles, 2002). The iLit curriculum provides targeted instruction and learning opportunities to build proficiency in these crucial comprehension processes.

Direct training of strategies can increase students’ competence in employing the strategy, their awareness of the strategy, and their comprehension of text for which the strategy was intended (National Reading Panel, 2000). Teacher modeling and monitoring of strategy use has been shown to have positive effects on comprehension (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, and Baker, 2001). Strategy training, which has been known to increase students’ accomplishments in the reading process, has led to increased self-efficacy and motivation to do more reading (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997).

One of the main components of explicit instruction is modeling. According to Reading Next, teacher modeling involves reading texts aloud and using strategies to illustrate the “practice of reading” to students. When students have vicariously experienced good reading techniques, they can more easily envision the ultimate goal of the skills they are learning.

In Beers’ (1990) study of alliterate seventh graders (students who could read but chose not to), students selected having a teacher read aloud in an exciting voice as one of the few activities they

found to be motivating. More recently, Albright (2002) showed how read-alouds in a seventh grade social studies class fostered engagement and learning. In a survey of 1,700 sixth graders, teacher read-alouds were named one of the two most preferred reading activities in school. Students saw the read-alouds as, “scaffolds to understanding because the teacher helped to make the text more comprehensible or more interesting to them,” (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, p. 367).

What iLit does:

- Directed instruction/strategies
- Modeling
- Read-alouds/think-alouds

Directed Instruction/Strategies

The iLit program directly teaches effective, research-based comprehension strategies. Fielding & Pearson (1994) identified four components that are included in successful comprehension instruction: (1) large amounts of time for reading, (2) teacher-directed instruction in comprehension strategies, (3) opportunities for peer and collaborative learning, and (4) occasions for students to talk to a teacher and one another about their responses to reading. These components were also found to be key elements of comprehension instruction in the Reading Next report (Snow & Biancarosa, 2004). iLit provides direct instruction for reading strategies such as monitoring, predicting, inferring, questioning, connecting, summarizing, visualizing, and organizing, which have all shown to help students become successful readers (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Miller, 2002; Pardo, 2002).

iLit incorporates teacher **modeling** of reading and strategy use into its daily class time. Reading aloud and think-alouds are two of the ways that modeling is used in the program.

Reading aloud a variety of materials has been shown to increase students’ understanding of content, and promote their engagement and inquiry into the ideas they encounter (Albright, 2002; Roser & Keehn, 2002). Reading aloud is an excellent way to model good reading and fluency. Research indicates that motivation, interest, and engagement are often enhanced when teachers read aloud to middle school students. In addition, educators claim that reading aloud to middle school students can introduce them to books they might not locate on their own (Lesesne, 2001). The research suggests that teacher read-alouds in middle grades can have positive outcomes for both motivation and learning. But, students are typically exposed to read-alouds less frequently as they move from primary to secondary grades (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). iLit ensures that secondary students will continue to have reading aloud as part of their literacy instructional experiences.

Through **think-alouds**, teachers verbalize their own thinking processes and use of reading strategies as they read aloud to students. This allows students to assess their own metacognitive thinking processes and compare it with that of a proficient reader. Through think alouds, teachers demonstrate each strategy: what it is, how it is applied, and when and why it should be used (Duffy et al., 1988; Paris et al., 1991). This gives students a benchmark or a goal. Vaidya (1999) found that while proficient readers often create their own learning strategies for various tasks, struggling readers are often not able to do this because they lack an awareness of their own learning needs.

Think-alouds allow students to see ways to effectively improve their own reading in a

non-threatening way. “If strategy training is carried out in a metacognitive, self-regulative context, in connection with specific content rather than generalized skills...positive results are much more likely,” (Hattie, Biggs, & Purdue, 1996, p. 101). iLit provides students with frequent exposure to think-alouds.

3. Vocabulary Instruction (Word Study)

What the research says:

Extensive research shows that vocabulary and comprehension are closely correlated (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; NRC, 2001; Yovanoff, et al., 2005; Biancaros & Snow, 2004). Students who read widely and deeply often have large vocabularies, are fluent readers, and have a high degree of comprehension. In *Reading Next* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004), the ability to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words is listed as a key component of reading comprehension.

What iLit does:

- Explicit (direct) vocabulary instruction
- Indirect vocabulary instruction

Direct Vocabulary Instruction

The iLit program incorporates explicit vocabulary instruction that research studies have shown to be effective. In iLit classes, students learn words in rich contexts—with a deep understanding of multiple denotations, connotations, and nuances (Irvin, 1998; NICHD, 2001). They learn to use morphological analysis (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) to gain meaning from words (Biemiller, 2003; Irvin, 1998; Sousa, 2005). Additionally, students learn how to use context clues (frequent and capable use of prior knowledge, knowledge of syntax [how words are put together in a sentence] and semantics [what makes sense in context]) (Irvin, 1998; Sousa, 2005). The ability to take abstract words (e.g., liberty, justice) and generate clear mental images of these concepts is also a valuable skill for word understanding (Sousa, 2005; Swaab, Baynes, & Knight, 2002). All of these methods are used in the iLit program and have shown to increase students’ ability to understand and gain meaning from words.

Indirect Vocabulary Instruction

Vocabulary growth can come in a number of ways, including direct-word study, but if it occurs in a vacuum, instruction may not be effective. Linking direct instructional approaches with indirect instruction that includes wide reading is the key to effective vocabulary growth and improvement in reading comprehension and fluency. Indirect instruction occurs during independent reading, read-aloud/ think-aloud, in small-group reading and discussion, in reading conferences, and during small-group reading instruction. Once students have the skills to infer word meaning (through direct instruction), they need opportunities to engage in independent reading to allow them to encounter a substantial number of unfamiliar words, and to use these skills to derive word meaning independently. Independent reading is the major source of vocabulary growth once students have learned the skills they need (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001; Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1988; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; and Nagy, 1988).

4. Authentic Reading & Writing Experiences

What the research says:

Authentic texts provide a wide variety of reading experiences. This range of text is important because adolescents who see literacy as useful and fulfilling are more likely to identify themselves as readers, and consequently, read more often (Hinchman, Alvermann, Boyd, Brozo, & Vacca, 2004; Wilhelm, 2001). Independent reading is lauded as an important aspect of any strong literacy program (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; McLaughlin, 2003). iLit provides consistent opportunities for students to read independently, thus helping them build proficiency and fluency, and develop the confidence to try increasingly advanced books (Clay, 1991; Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson, 1986; Taylor, Graves, & Van den Broek, 2000; Torgesen, Rashotte, & Alexander, 2001). Encouraging reading in school is particularly important for adolescents because research shows that these students read less on their own than students in the elementary grades (Goodman, 1996; Tunnell, Calder, & Phaup, 1991).

The Reading Next report states that, “effective adolescent literacy programs must include an element that helps students improve their writing skills.” In the iLit program, students read and write using multiple texts within each genre (narrative, informational, and sub-genres, such as texts, using argument or reasoning). Working with a depth and variety of genres significantly and positively affects both reading and writing skills (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1984).

What iLit does:

- Authentic reading
- Authentic writing
- Writing Practice with Instantaneous Feedback

The iLit program is designed to provide **authentic reading** experiences with supportive, scaffolded instruction that builds confidence in students, yet also challenges them to grow. Authentic reading materials are real-world publications that have not been altered in form or content (e.g., original publications of young adult literature, newspapers, etc.) (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Research shows that students who only encounter texts that are read easily have no reason to practice and apply strategies. Through encounters with a variety of challenging texts, students are required to put strategies to use (Kucer, 2001). iLit provides students with ample reading and writing practice with both literature and expository texts.

iLit provides authentic writing experiences using a variety of formats that are relevant to students. **Authentic writing**, writing for multiple audiences, and writing for real-world purposes (rather than only for the teacher) have shown to increase the motivation to write in adolescents (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Tompkins, 2002). Because competent teacher feedback is highly correlated with writing improvement (see Ferris, 1997, for a review and empirical findings grounded in a large sample), iLit prepares teachers to provide effective and meaningful support for student writers. Feedback is structured to provide students with the knowledge and opportunity to cultivate, shape, and refine their ideas through multiple drafts of their work (Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997; Sternglass, 1998; Zellermayer, 1989). Students in the iLit program are assessed using rubrics (a set of guidelines for student work that list the criteria needed to meet certain levels of quality from excellent to poor [Goodrich, 1997; Popham, 1997]), which give them a detailed and objective way to understand

what is required for each writing assignment. Using rubrics for assessments gives students usable feedback that they can draw on to improve their writing skills (Andrade, 2005). iLit uses a combination of direct writing instruction and appropriate feedback to allow students to gradually develop the skills necessary to view their own work critically, revise it, and become better writers.

iLit focuses on writing for content knowledge expression across a variety of academic subjects, such as science, social studies, and history. It also contains essay prompts similar to those used for state writing assessment and college entrance exams.

Thanks to iLit's state-of-the-art automated essay scoring, powered by Pearson Knowledge Technologies, **students are able to practice writing frequently in iLit**, and to receive instant feedback on the quality, traits, and mechanics of the work that they submit.

iLit feedback encourages students to incorporate revision into their writing process by providing:

- **For essays** - An overall holistic essay score; scores and feedback on six traits (ideas, organization, conventions, sentence fluency, word choice, voice); and feedback on spelling, grammar, and repeated information
- **For summaries** - Section-by-section coverage and feedback on appropriate length, unimportant and redundant content, and copying from the text along with revision hints. The average student revises an assignment six times; practice and more practice leads to proficiency.

Each essay prompt is scored by Pearson Knowledge Technologies (PKT) using scores assigned by human raters to several hundred representative student essays all written in response to a particular essay prompt or question for a particular grade level.

By using computational modeling, PKT mimics the way in which human readers score. In study after study comparing the performance of PKT to that of skilled human graders, the quality of PKT's assessment equals or surpasses that of the humans. *(For more information about PKT's assessment engine, see the Appendix.)*

For summaries across diverse content areas, the feedback captures how well the student has covered the content of each major section of the document that the student has read. The read, write, and revise cycle encourages the students to reread and re-express those parts of the text that they have not as well understood.

Teachers play an indispensable role when using iLit—they can add the extras that the software cannot address, such as suggesting ways to reorganize an essay, examples that might amplify the main point, and so forth. By contrast, with a traditional classroom-assigned essay, the teacher can assign only a few essays per year, limited by the hours that need to be devoted to reading and commenting on each student draft. iLit students submitted an average of six revisions for each essay assignment. Luckily, a teacher can be the recipient of the students' best efforts and have the leisure to add the personalized human insights and comments that can bring students and teachers together in the quest for competency and excellence.

A primary reason why iLit works is that it motivates students to spend more time reading, writing, and revising.

One frequently heard comment is that students engage in the task better and more willingly when they are using iLit. The engagement comes from instantaneous feedback. Students see immediate progress and understand that they can control the learning outcome. It is also game-like in its iterative feedback.

5. Differentiated Monitoring and Instruction

What the research says:

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to struggling readers in middle and high school. iLit is uniquely designed to meet both individual and whole-group needs. While the importance of regularly scheduled, formal assessments is necessary to gauge student progress, studies have also documented that the practice of frequent, informal monitoring (formative assessment) can produce significant learning gains, especially with low achievers (Black & William, 1998; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2004).

What iLit does:

- **Ongoing monitoring**—The iLit program provides continual monitoring of student performance through formative assessment combined with targeted, differentiated instruction for each student through a robust proprietary progress monitoring technology.
- **Targeted instruction**—based on formative assessment

Ongoing Monitoring

iLit teachers continually monitor student progress through observation, conferencing, inquiry, and other methods in order to provide targeted and differentiated instruction in a timely manner. These frequent and informed interactions between student and teacher also help students learn to self-assess their progress. Thus, both teachers and students in the iLit program remain informed participants who can adapt instruction and focus on the skills that are most relevant to each student's needs at any given point along the learning continuum (Black & William, 1998). Ongoing, automatic feedback allows iLit students and teachers real-time data across multiple performance areas from multiple data points.

Targeted Instruction

iLit uses assessment paired with progress monitoring to target instruction and set goals for students based on their ongoing instructional needs. Students are periodically assessed to monitor their progress in comprehension, vocabulary, reading fluency, and writing. Targeted instruction is truly personalized for each student in a Personalized Study Plan that includes leveled comprehension, vocabulary, reading and writing practice. iLit is designed to meet the four criteria essential for effectively targeting instruction to meet student needs: It is timely, specific, understandable to the student, and allows for appropriate self-adjustment on the student's part (Wiggins, 1998). Additionally, the iLit assessment protocol addresses the three factors that influence student motivation to learn. Students are more likely to put forth effort when (1) they clearly understand the learning goal and know how teachers will evaluate their learning, (2) when they think the learning goals and assessments are meaningful and worth learning, and (3) when they believe they can successfully learn and meet the evaluative expectations.



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