Commercial Reading Programs Containing All or Most of the Critical Elements for Effective Programs:
Feldman’s “Biased Bibliography” K-6

Note: There is NO BEST reading program, there are good ones and all the rest. This is not intended as an exhaustive listing, rather it is a sampling/review of reading programs with a particular eye towards what works with diverse and struggling readers, students with identified “learning disabilities”, and others with reading difficulties. The “screen” I have used is - does it align with the NICHD, National Reading Panel and other validated research summaries? And does it have some school level empirical data to support its efficacy? Many of these programs focus on key decoding skills and need good literature/exposition/writing/etc. added to create the balance needed for a comprehensive literacy program. KF

Beginning Reading & Reading Support- Intervention Programs

   In my view, it is the best general education anthology or basal reading program currently available in terms of research support and alignment with NICHD evidence. Open Court is the only major anthology that directly teaches sound blending and provides decodable books that are truly decodable. One caution, Open Court may move too fast for students with serious reading difficulties. It would be an excellent choice for general education, but support programs may need to supplement (e.g. pre-teaching the afternoon before the lesson).
   **  I would now add the Houghton-Mifflin 2002 series to the general education core program list, as well as the new Harcourt Program (although not approved in California) in addition to Open Court, outside of California McGraw Hill and Harcourt would be worthwhile considerations too...

2.) Scholastic Phonic Readers & Phonic Chapter Books- John Shefelbine - (800) 724-6527,
   Not a complete Language Arts curriculum, but a wonderful supplement for anyone needing a good beginning decoding program. The program uses attractive decodable books, blackline masters teachers can copy so kids can take home books, detailed lesson plans moving systematically through the critical skills and patterns, directly teaches sound blending...a very solid program for beginning readers. (now in CD ROM format too!)

3.) Phonics for Reading - Anita Archer et al. - Curriculum Associates -
   (800) 225 - 0248; Ca. rep. is Cynthia Gasporovich (408) 293-2221.
   Not a complete Language Arts curriculum, but an excellent supplement if you are looking for a sound decoding program. It is the least expensive solid program I know of... it systematically goes from pre-primer level to about third grade. Scripted lessons provide teachers with all they need to directly build these critical skills and strategies. Comes in three levels (roughly grades 1-3), much like a "Junior REWARDS" program. It is excellent!

4.) Reading Mastery - SRA, - Zig Engleman et al, - (800) 662-5958 www.sra4kids.com
   An upgraded and improved version of the old DISTAR program, RM is a direct instruction program. Research results for RM have consistently demonstrated its effectiveness, especially for at risk and special needs students. Many special education teachers have experienced excellent results with RM. The program contains scripted lessons, student response books, and lots of controlled decodable texts. No Ca. consultant, Sue Coleman (707) 538 - 4877, provides expert training and classroom coaching with RM.

5.) Project READ - http://www.projectread.com/ (800) 450-0343
   Project READ was developed for struggling readers in the primary grades and has been expanded for use in general education as well. The program is very simply sequenced and involves teacher directed lessons and practice in decodable texts. I have not seen any published studies evaluating Project READ, but the informal testimonials have been very positive and from teachers I trust and respect... worth a look.

   Not a reading program but a book about word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling. An excellent resource for teachers wanting to expand their spelling program from memorizing letter sequences for a weekly test - to word study that helps kids learn key patterns of how words work (the same patterns you are directly teaching during reading instruction). The book provides a wonderful assessment tool to find a students’ level of word knowledge and details on how to build a word study program that matches their level. Based on an emerging research base (see Henderson, Templeton, et al.).

7) Read Well - Sprick et al. Sopris West, www.sopriswest.com, (800) 547-6747
   Read Well is a field-tested reading program that artfully blends research-based skills instruction with strong
literature foundations. Appropriate for both natural readers and students who need systematic instruction, Read Well provides an accelerated program for high performers and expanded lessons for high-risk readers. Its 38 units feature orally presented literature and expository text selections, daily decoding lessons, and daily passage reading to meet the needs of: First grade and remedial second and third grade students, Schools in search of an effective bridge to literature-based programs, Schools in need of a low-cost, systematic phonics program with rich literature interactions... Read Well is very solid.

8.) PALS Kinder, Gr. 1, & Upper Grade (Peer Assisted Learning Strategies) - Mathes, Torgesen, et al. (1999), Available from Sonoma County SELPA (707) 524-2750 - soon to be published by Sopris West. Based on the classwide peer tutoring model designed and validated by Greenwood et al. and later adapted by Fuchs and Fuchs at Vanderbilt. PALS is a structured partner practice program, one for K (letter knowledge and phoneme awareness), grade one (decoding and fluency), and upper grade fluency and comprehension strategies. It is NOT a complete intervention curriculum, rather it is designed as a practice program to ensure differentiation of instruction and active participation by each student. PALS has excellent research data to support it's effectiveness.

9.) Alphagram Learning Materials - www.alphagram.com - 1 888 - READ. Excellent supplementary materials for K-2 reading, inexpensive too. Assisted by expert reading teachers like Ruth Nathan, these materials are fun/useful/easy to utilize. One of my favs is the “is it a word- or not?” flip book of letter combinations - kind of a spin on making words but with no letter tiles to dump on the floor etc. (all on key rings) - very nifty and effective.

10.) SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, & Sight Words) - Developmental Studies Center - (510) 533-0213 and now distributed by Scholastic at: www.scholastic.com Another excellent resource by Dr. John Shefelbine - excellent for gr. K - 3/5 in general ed. and/or intervention to systematically teach beginning decoding through polysyllabic word reading and for older students at any age who need the skills. SIPPS comes in three levels: 1) Beginning Level (short vowel/single syllable decoding), 2) Extension Level (complex vowels/single syllable decoding), and 3) Challenge Level (polysyllabic decoding). SIPPS has correlated story books/sound-spelling cards/sight word cards/etc.

11.) Soar to Success - Houghton- Mifflin - (888-892-2377) www.eduplace.com/rdg/soar/ Soar to Success is based on two strong aspects of successful reading intervention: reading books at your level, and using cognitive strategies of good readers - in this case, Reciprocal Teaching (summarize, predict, clarify, question). Soar is for students in grades 3-8 who are behind in reading - a very strong program BUT does not include decoding, so many students will need a program like REWARDS to supplement Soar - to provide the comprehensive intervention they need. Soar is based on original research conducted in Ca. by Irene Boschken with assistance from J. David Cooper of Ball State.

12) The 6 Minute Solution: Sopris West, www.sopriswest.com A very nifty program, created by Master Teacher Gail Adams, to provide students in general education fluency practice using interesting, age-appropriate, short expository selections. The program employs a whole class partner reading routine to provide “guided oral repeated reading” at each students’ instructional level, appropriate for grades 3-8. The program has 180 passages written at grades 1-8. Superb for the students needing a “fluency bump” but not something as intensive as Read Naturally (see Read Naturally below under tech based programs).

13) Great Leaps: www.greatleaps.com Great Leaps is another fine teacher developed intervention program that works on fluency. GL comes in levels for, K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. It is unique in that it is designed and validated to work with students 1-1 for 10 min. per day with a Paraprofessional or volunteer tutor. The program works daily on phonics, sight phrases, and reading connected text - all with a fluency (“guided oral repeated reading at your level”) model. GL is especially good for intensive level students who need a “double dose” of fluency instruction.

13) Quick Reads - www.pearsonlearning.com/- Elfrieda “Freddy” Hiebert. Quick Reads is an interesting fluency program for grades 3-5 that uses themed or “narrow reading” texts around a common topic to intentionally recycle important high use vocabulary so students experience multiple exposures to novel vocabulary. QR also has a high tech option using the voice recognition engine from Soliloquy - very cool use of technology to support struggling readers.

14) Fluency Formula - Scholastic - Wiley Blevins - www.scholastic.com The Fluency Formula is a comprehensive fluency program designed for the elementary grades. One of the nice things about FF is the inclusion of an array of leveled books for fluency practice. This program is designed to be used for 15 min. per day in general education classrooms. A fine solution to the students who don't need a "heavy duty" fluency intervention (e.g. Read Naturally) but could benefit from fluency work beyond any that may be included in the school adopted basal anthology.
Phonemic Awareness/PreReading Phonology/Early Intervention-Prevention

There are many excellent programs in this domain, and more coming online all the time, among the best in my opinion (research based and often research validated - i.e. the first 3 are all validated programs) include:

1.) Phonemic Awareness in Young Children - Marilyn Adams et al. Paul Brooks pub.
www.pbrookes.com (800) 638-3775. A comprehensive Kinder curriculum that would do well in almost any classroom, very complimentary of adopted core programs in California (e.g. Open Court, Houghton-Mifflin).

Major weakness is in instructional design - requires strong teacher knowledge to insure the excellent activities are implemented in a robust manner.

2.) Road to the Code - Blackman et al. -Paul Brooks pub. www.pbrookes.com (800) 638-3775. Another comprehensive Kinder curriculum that would do well in almost any classroom, very complimentary of adopted core programs in California (e.g. Open Court, Houghton-Mifflin). I really like Road to the Code because the core activity "say it - move it" is so powerful, and adaptable for young children. This is a superb little curriculum.

3.) Ladders to Literacy - Paul Brooks pub. www.pbrookes.com (800) 638-3775. Another comprehensive Kinder curriculum that would do well in almost any classroom, very complimentary of adopted core programs in California (e.g. Open Court, Houghton-Mifflin). Ladders also has preK program for 4 yr. olds and a web-based support group via the U of Washington - see http://www.wri-edu.org/ladders/ Ladders is not as complete at the higher levels of phonemic awareness as Road or PA in YC... but it is a strong program.

4). Soundabet - www.soundabet.com 707.824-1871 - this is a teacher designed program by noted Sonoma County Kindergarten teacher, Dan Gurney. Soundabet introduces the 40 most common sounds (phonemes) of English and their corresponding spellings. Using music and interactive writing/games Soundabet is a delightful and effective way to develop phonemic awareness and basic alphabetic principle in young learners.

5.) Lindamood/Bell - Lips - http://www.lindamoodbell.com/ 1-800-233-1819

The Lindamood Phonemic Sequencing™ (LiPS™) Program (formerly called the ADD Program, Auditory Discrimination in Depth) successfully stimulates phonemic awareness. Individuals become aware of the mouth actions which produce speech sounds. This awareness becomes the means of verifying sounds within words and enables individuals to become self-correcting in reading and spelling, and speech. LiPS is a venerable program, long track record, it works...
My only concern is that it is "overkill" for many students, and is best utilized (in my opinion) when more efficient/less time intensive methods have not proven effective.

6.) Early Reading Intervention (Project Optimize) - Scott Forseman: www.scottforesman.com/eri/ 1 800-552-2259 - Written by noted researcher/authors Drs. Ed Kame'enui and Deb Simmons, Optimize is a state of the art early intervention/prevention curriculum. The research base is very robust - longitudinal studies indicated 97% of the children taught w/Optimize in K learned achieved better than matched controls and sustained this growth into second grade (see: http://reading.uoregon.edu/ for more). This is a very powerful program, 30 min. per day, that produces excellent results.

Dictionaries for Vocabulary Work

Issue - most classroom dictionaries do not help students learn new words (or teachers explain them too well for that matter) because they often: 1) use their forms of the word to define the new word, 2) use language as or more complex the word in question, 3) do not include appropriate "showing sentences" - or any sentence using the word at all... The ESL/TESOL world however has some wonderful "learner dictionaries" that are very appropriate for students and teachers. These dictionaries have been written by lexicographers who limit their explanations to using the 2,000 most common words in English to explain novel words, in addition they provide clear and appropriate "showing sentences" using the words in context - great tools every teacher needs!

1) Heinle & Heinle - nhd.heinle.com/home.aspx
The Heinle dictionaries are excellent, as is their free web based learner dictionary. I especially like their "Basic Newbury House Dictionary".

2) Longman - www.longman.com
Another excellent publisher of learner dictionaries is Longman. They also have a free web online dictionary. I especially like their "Dictionary of American English" and the "Advanced Dictionary of American English".

Technology Based Reading Related Programs

Note: Many of these programs have scant evidence to support their use, some have a degree of pre test/post test evaluation but not well controlled research. None the less, computer based support for improving literacy does hold out much promise and another resource worth providing to students with reading difficulties as a supplement to excellent teacher directed instruction and independent reading. KF
Motivation & Record Keeping Software

**NOTE:** These are NOT reading programs, there is NO instruction involved in them!! However, they are very useful in terms of matching student reading ability to text difficulty and in providing a motivational framework for some students who are not yet connected to the intrinsic joys of reading.

1.) Accelerated Reader/Advantage Learning Systems - 800 890 -1472, www.advdlearn.com
Accelerated reader is a nifty reading monitoring & motivation system. Kids read books off line and take simple, but reliable, on line reading tests to validate they got the basics of the story. All data is charted and tracked for the teacher and kids. STAR uses a cloze or maze test to ascertain reading levels, not as valid as oral reading - but as good as can be done on a computer & many report they are quite accurate. Thousands of titles are leveled by readability helping teachers pin point instructional and independent reading levels. A useful tool, but NOT an instructional program. (Math is their new product...)

2.) Reading Counts/Scholastic Reading Inventory - Scholastic - (800) 724-6527, www.scholastic.com Reading Counts offers easy-to-use, computerized quizzes on popular, high-quality books. Students select a book from more than 20,000 outstanding titles. After students read the book, they take a custom-generated quiz that verifies their reading comprehension and provides immediate feedback. After the quiz, they receive a point score in recognition of their reading accomplishments. A new product (actually an expansion of an old one bought out by Scholastic) designed to give AR a run for their money. Scholastic Reading Inventory is a nifty computer based assessment of comprehension that reports out in Lexile Levels.

3.) Bookadventure.org - a web based reading incentive, motivation, and record keeping program that is FREE!! It has over 3,000 titles in the database (with more added all the time) that can be searched by reading level, topic, author... a wonderful resource that is sponsored by Sylvan Learning Systems, Lycos, and Barnes & Noble...

4.) Lexile - www.lexile.com - a website and e-resource center for matters related to matching reader level text difficulty. There are over 35,000 texts loaded into the Lexile database which you can search by author or title for FREE. The assessment they suggest is the SRI (see #2 above), but even as an AR school this is a site loaded with useful tools.

Phonemic Awareness

1.) Daisey’s Quest and Daisey’s Castle - Great Wave Software, (800) 423-1144, www.greatwave.com
Designed by noted researcher Joe Torgesen and colleagues, these two programs have proved to be effective for primary age students needing to practice key phonemic awareness skills such as sound blending sound segmenting, sound rhyming, etc. Three controlled studies by Toregesen et al. indicate Daisy does build PA skills in young children. Daisey if very inexpensive and represents one nice use of technology to build language.

2.) Earobics - (888) 328 - 8199, www.cogcon.com
Developmental Ages 4-7. Earobics Step 1 features six interactive games, each with as many as 114 levels of play, that systematically teach the critical phonological awareness, auditory processing and phonics skills required for learning how to read. Earobics is sort of like a higher tech Daisy, same ideas but with more graphics, better sound, more sophisticated teacher control and progress monitoring. Evaluations currently underway...

3.) Waterford Early Reading Program - (510) 742-0552 - Scott Foresman.
The BMW of these programs, very expensive and very good, at least in K. It has it all, good research support, wonderful content, sophisticated user control & progress monitoring - very impressive program. If you have the budget - well worth checking out. They have just released a grade one reading program that also looks interesting, however one evaluation in Texas did not find any gains with it... so, the “jury” it still out!

4.) Fast Forward - Scientific Learning Corp. 1-510-665-9700 or toll free 888-665-9707 - Designed and researched by Paula Tallal and David Merzenich. Fast ForWord does not teach children to read. Fast ForWord is, however, an effective pre-reading program for many children. Fast ForWord training focuses on language skills that are necessary for many children to learn before they can make significant progress in reading. Scientific Learning Corporation believes that there is a continuum of language skills needed to learn to read. These skills included phonemic awareness and differentiation, phonological awareness, morphology, grammar, syntax, and language comprehension. There is much to be interested in here but with cautions - the program does not teach reading, it is very expensive, and is not the cure all some parent advocates and others like to claim... and we have no evidence that this expensive option is any better than some of the more modest options noted above... let the buyer beware!

5.) LeapFrog School House - www.leapfrogschoolhouse.com, 800.883-7430
An interactive multisensory/multimedia curriculum. The Leap into Literacy curriculum, helps students “leap into
learning" within a classroom setting, combines touch, sight, and sound in Pre-K and K-2 packages. Top flight reading researchers Drs. Bob Calfee, Anne Cunningham, & Ruth Nathan consulted with LeapFrog to insure it aligns best practices in the research literature. LeapFrog uses a combination of audio books, "Leap Pad", Leap Desk" with talking letters, phonograms, words, and more... (this would also fit under the "beginning reading" category below).

**Beginning Reading & Early Reading Tech Based Support Programs**

1.) **Scholastic Interactive Phonics Readers** - 800 724-6527 www.scholastic.com

This program is wonderful - using the Shefelbine Phonics readers with all kinds of top notch practice activities (e.g. phonemic matching, blending, spelling, oral reading, etc.). This provides a wonderful way to differentiate by providing students extra practice and support beyond your excellent teacher directed instruction. These CD's are a good example what reading support technology for young readers should look like in my opinion.

2.) **Little Planet Literacy Series** - (800) 974 - 2248, www.littleplanet.com

Designed and validated by the Learning Technology Center at Vanderbilt University, Little Planet is a K-4 package that provides a comprehensive, multimedia, language and literacy program that builds on the reading writing connections using literature. Evaluations suggest that is helpful for building reading comprehension and vocabulary.

3.) **Wiggleworks** - Scholastic - (800) 724-6527 www.scholastic.com

WiggleWorks, the Scholastic Beginning Literacy System, is a multimedia, interactive CD-ROM based reading and writing program for grades K-2. The WiggleWorks literacy program was recently developed by Scholastic Publishing Company and the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST). Recent third party studies indicate that Wiggleworks increased various forms of literacy development in grade one students. I have some concerns about the use of WW with struggling readers due to it's incidental teaching of work attack/ decoding skills (I find the Interactive Readers by Shefelbine to have a far better design for young readers).

4.) **Soliloquy** - www.soliloquylearning.com/(781) 453-4060

State of the art software application that leverages speech recognition technology to encourage readers to practice reading, increase fluency, and develop vocabulary. Readers may select from a variety of reading content that is high-interest and level appropriate. As students read into a microphone, our speech recognition technology tracks their reading performance and offers help when it's needed. The application includes a record and playback feature as well as progress reports for teachers and parents. Marilyn Adams is their lead consultant so you know it is good!

5.) **Intellitools - Balanced Literacy for Beginning Readers** - www.intellitools.com/, 800-899-6687 This wonderful CD has 9 anchor stories, 100 electronic books, and tons of correlated activities in word study, phonics, spelling using an onset/rime approach. This program was researched with a NICHD grant and proven to be a very effective supplement for at risk students needing more differentiated practice. I would add a note here - to be sure to teach students sound by sound blending before they transition into onset/rime, research by Ehri et al. suggests struggling readers do not generalize onset/rime well - and do best if taught sound by sound in addition to onset/rime.

6.) **Read Naturally** - (800) 788-4085, readnat@aol.com , www.readnaturally.com

Designed and validated by long time Title One teacher and reading specialist Candyce Ihnot, Read Naturally is a fluency development program that is garnering rave reviews across the country. It uses 3 research based strategies to build fluency: teacher modeling, repeated readings, progress monitoring in a simple yet effective format that kids love. Sold by the unit from .8 to 7.0 grade/reading levels each with pre-recorded tapes or CD ROMs to go with the reading selections. Since this is a practice - not a teaching program, it can be easily run by a paraeducator...and kids love the reading selections... Read Naturally is, in my view, the "gold standard" of all reading fluency programs..

7.) **Word Sort** - www.HendersonEdSoft.com - based on the well respected work of Words Their Way authors: Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston - this share-ware provides a wide range of computer based word sorts sequenced by level of difficulty and time. The software is easy to use, teacher friendly, and totally appropriate for kids/adults since it is not at all "cutesy"... VERY cool software in my opinion (see Hanlon, Cantrell; Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Sept, 1999 for research support for this tool.

8.) **Words Their Way Interactive Resource CD ROM** - Prentice Hall, www.prenhall.com/bear  This CD is an excellent resource for spelling/word study/phonics work based on the book, Words Their Way by Bear et al. (2000). It contains games, word sorts, word lists, Spanish instruction information, guidelines for assessing students to match level to activities, and much more. The authors also have a nice website full of resources you can check out at: www.prenhall.com/bear Word study/spelling is very powerful when correlated with your reading instruction program. These two word sorting CD's provide useful tools for teachers to engage all student at their instructional level. (note: this is **FREE** to individual teachers - download a copy today!!)

9.) **Inspiration 7.0 & Kidspiration** -(800) 877-4292 http://www.inspiration.com/
The premier tool to develop ideas and organize thinking to support reading comprehension, pre-writing, outlining, etc. Inspiration 6 integrates an expanded range of visual learning and thinking techniques with the latest standards in graphics and Internet technology. Use it to brainstorm, organize thoughts and communicate ideas. It is very cool - also see the U of Oregon "Computer Based Study Strategies" site for tons of ideas/support/training using Inspiration, Co-Writer and more: http://npip.com/CBSS/ or call (541) 346-2623... FREE training supported by the US Office of Special Education is currently available - check it out!

10.) Read, Write & Type - see www.readwritetype.com/- is a very nifty program built on the frame of the old Learning Company software and dramatically improved thanks to the hard work of Dr. Jeanine Heron and a NICHD grant. Using a "talking keys" approach RWT develops phonology, decoding/blending, and other beginning reading skills. It also has a Spanish tutor built in, so any directions in English can be read aloud in Spanish. Teachers' manuals includes lots of take home books etc. - Dr. Joe Torgesen's group in Florida has validated RWT as improving significant literacy outcomes with young at risk learners.

Afterward
Technology oriented resources are literally exploding. The above listing will be out of date immediately and is incomplete right now! I advise folks to be "skeptically open minded". While there is much to be optimistic about very little of the commercial software is even field tested or pre/post test evaluated in real school settings - let alone studied with proper controls. However, I find much to be hopeful about in terms of the uses of technology to support literacy development in diverse learners. It is a "natural" for many reason; kids tend to like it, ease of differentiation to meet individual needs, computers are patient, etc. There are good programs available currently and many more are in production... just keep those "show me the evidence" glasses on! KF

Teacher Knowledge Tools
There is simply far too much "essential information" to be included here - so I have limited myself to a couple of seminal "must have" resources for teachers and other educators concerned with expanding their expertise in literacy.

1) CORE - The Source Book - www.corelearn.com/ If I could only put one professional book on the teaching of reading in the hands of a teacher - this would be it. Comprehensive from phonology to comprehension, ELLs to LD... and with detailed examples all based on excellent research - their assessment book, Assessing Reading Multiple Measures is also a "must have" for assessments.

2) Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction - Isabel Beck et al. - www.guilford.com The single best book on vocabulary, especially for elementary teachers, out there today. This book is not only theoretically sound, it is packed with practical classroom based instructional strategies for one of the most important - and most neglected aspects of literacy - vocabulary instruction.

3) Overcoming Dyslexia - Sally Shaywitz, Knopf publishers. This is the single most comprehensive review of the state of our art/science in reading intervention, reading difficulties, and related research circa 2003. Sally Shaywitz is a long time NICHD researcher at Yale and has done a wonderful job of pulling together the knowledge base and practical/specific interventions appropriate for parents, teachers, and interested professionals. A masterful work.

4) Speech to Print - Louisa Moats, www.pbrookes.com Louisa Moats is the master of educational linguistics and their link to effective literacy instruction. This fine book pulls it all together "language essentials for teachers". A brief monograph based on the book is free at www.aft.org called, Teaching Reading: It is Rocket Science. Also see her LETRS program at www.sopriswest.com

4) Reading Instruction That Works: The Case of Balanced Teaching. Pressley, www.guilford.com Noted cognitive psychologist Michael Pressley has a gem here, clearly shows how explicit teaching of decoding, fluency, and comprehension/writing in a thoughtful-strategic manner is at the heart of solid literacy instruction.