



## Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction

Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), developed by Dr. John Guthrie, is a research-based classroom instructional framework emphasizing reading engagement, reading comprehension, and conceptual learning in content areas. Many empirical studies, including quasi-experimental research conducted with upper-elementary students, including struggling readers, have provided compelling evidence of CORI's effectiveness in improving the comprehension of expository text.

Two main strands of instruction comprise the CORI framework: (1) cognitive strategy instruction, and (2) practices supporting students' engagement in reading. CORI teachers are trained to support students in using cognitive reading strategies to help them construct knowledge from text. The strategies are activating background knowledge, questioning, searching for information, summarizing, graphic organizing, and comprehension monitoring. Importantly, students in CORI are taught to use reading strategies in a functional context of reading to understand expository text, in contrast to programs that teach strategies with little attention to content.

CORI is designed on the premise that reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. The purpose of CORI is to optimize the development of reading engagement. The instruction contains conceptual themes, real world science interactions, self-directed learning, strategy instruction situated within conceptual contexts, peer collaborations, self-expression of knowledge through portfolios and exhibits.

CORI teachers are trained to support students' engagement in reading through five motivational practices: (1) focusing on content goals in a conceptual theme, (2) affording choices and control to students, (3) providing hands-on activities to pique students' interest in the theme's topics, (4) using interesting texts that are related to the concepts being learned, and (5) organizing effective collaboration to enable learning from text. CORI students engage in many activities to support their reading engagement and content knowledge growth, including observing tangible scientific phenomena, choosing topics and reading interesting texts that are connected in important ways to the content and strategic reading goals, and engaging in thoughtful text-based writing and knowledge communication.

Although most of the research on CORI has been in grades 3, 4, and 5, with help it can be adapted to nearly any grade level or content area. CORI works best in schools with principal support, teachers who are able and willing to collaborate with each other, and with science, history, and subjects demanding reading skills. CORI has been successfully implemented in middle and high school classrooms, as well as in the primary grades.

### Goal

The goal of CORI is to increase reading comprehension by teaching students to become competent in using the strategies, building inquiry skills, making them aware of when and how to apply the strategies before, during, and after reading, and observing how students self-initiate the use of the strategies when needed to assure self-regulation of effective reading in all content areas.

Teachers create 6-12 week units based on content concepts from the school/district curriculum. A variety of books from multiple genres on sub topics are identified for use by the teacher and students throughout

the CORI unit. Vocabulary and reading strategy lessons are designed based on the needs of the students as well as a culminating activity in which the students demonstrate their knowledge of the content.

## Professional Development

CORI training aligns with the Iowa Professional Development Model. This professional development plans for the delivery of theory, the provision of demonstrations and opportunities for practice in both the workshop and workplace setting with follow up sessions throughout the school year.

### *Participation Criteria*

Each public school district in Iowa has submitted a District Career Development Plan as part of their CSIP. Prior to participation in CORI training, the district professional development leadership team should review student data and the District Career Development Plan to make sure that CORI aligns well with goals and professional development targets established in the CSIP.

### *Composition of CORI team*

The school must commit to five days of initial training and four to five days of follow up professional development sessions.

The principal must be a member of the school team and attend all training sessions. Additional members of the team may include central office personnel.

The school must commit to releasing a **grade level team** of 4–5 teachers for training, follow up and implementation of CORI. Team members must include:

- \*Principal
- Content area teachers
- Reading/Language Arts teacher
- Special Education Title I, At-Risk, TAG, or ELL teacher
- AEA personnel

Participants must implement the model as designed. The school must allocate the equivalent of one day per month for the team to meet for planning and problem solving.

\*The principal will be a member of the school team engaged in the training and will be expected to participate in the training, implementation, and study of student performance of CORI in the school setting. Schools that have been successful in increasing student achievement have been found to have a principal who provides leadership and who is highly visible in implementing the initiative.

Schools/districts will be asked to purchase Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) as well as add books to their classroom collections to support the CORI curriculum units.

## Current Implementation

Three AEAs and 5 schools/districts are implementing CORI at the current time. Schools are in their 2<sup>nd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> years of implementation. Schools/districts involved in CORI have seen increases in ITBS scores. Results are available on the PERL website.

## **Additional Resources**

Guthrie, J. ((2004). *Motivating Reading Comprehension*. Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.

Swan, E. (2003)*Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction*. Guilford Press, New York, NY.