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CHAPTER 6

How Should I Teach It?

Intervention Methods and Teaching Strategies



Objectives

By the end of this chapter, the reader will be able to

1. Describe the six principles of the Core Intervention Model
2. Write clear intervention lesson objectives
3. Write a lesson plan that includes activities that break down PA and phonics skills for students
4. Develop staircase procedures for corrective feedback

Now that the scope and sequence of early reading intervention has been presented, let's examine how these skills should be taught to meet individual learners' needs in a classroom with many individual differences. This chapter focuses on the methods of teaching that are best suited for teaching early reading skills to struggling readers.

The Core Intervention Model of Instruction

The **Core Intervention Model (CIM)** (Gerber et al., 2004) is presented as a model for providing intervention. The CIM has been effective in remediating early reading difficulties in struggling readers, including English learners and those at risk for reading disabilities (Filippini, 2008; Gerber et al., 2004; Leafstedt et al., 2004; Richards et al., 2006; Solari & Gerber, 2008). The CIM is an instructional model based on theories of direct instruction. The research on direct instruction as a method for improving the academic success of low-performing students is vast (see Chapters 2 and 4). Similar to direct instruction, the six principles of CIM are that (1) students are taught in a small group; (2) specific objectives are set; (3) content and materials are appropriate for students' ability level; (4) skills are taught intensively, explicitly, and at a rapid pace; (5) students are provided opportunities for many

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correct responses; and (6) explicit correction procedures are used. In the following sections, each of the six principles of the Core Intervention Model will be described.

Principle 1 Teach in a small group.

In order for struggling readers to benefit, the CIM needs to be conducted in small groups. Over the years, research has demonstrated that small groups allow teachers to focus more on individual learning needs and to give students more attention than they would receive in whole class grouping (Elbaum et al., 1999). Small groups have been defined as 10 or fewer. However, reading research investigating various groupings of students has suggested that students make the most gains in small groups of three to four students (Elbaum, Vaughn & Hughes, 1999). In larger groups, even those with only seven students, teachers have more difficulty meeting student needs, and students do not have as many opportunities to respond. Likewise, one-to-one instruction has not been demonstrated to have more impact on student growth than small group

Box 6.1

Amount of Intervention Needed

How many minutes per day and how many days per week should students be provided early reading intervention?

The answer to this question will vary depending on the needs and grade level of the student. Research shows that at minimum, the intervention must take place at least 30 minutes a week for 10 weeks to achieve results (Ehri et al., 2001). However, for students who are very low performing, more intervention is necessary, generally for 20 to 30 minutes, three to five days a week for 10 weeks (O'Connor, 2007; Leafstedt et al., 2004). (For kindergartners, 15 minutes may be more realistic.) For students who already have an identified learning disability, generally 45 or more minutes of intervention five days a week for more than 10 weeks is necessary (Vaughn & Roberts, 2007). For students with learning disabilities, especially older students, part of intervention should be devoted to early skills, with the additional time used to develop more complex reading skills, such as fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

instruction, particularly for early reading skills, as students also learn from each other (Ehri et al., 2001). To maximize the impact of intervention, three to four students is the optimal size for a small group. This number allows students to have a great number of opportunities to respond and also allows them to observe their peers responding correctly thereby serving as a model. When delivering intervention in small groups, the length of intervention will vary with individual student needs (see Box 6.1).

Principle 2 Set specific objectives.

Intervention is designed to target individual student needs based on assessment data and teacher observation. Goals for each student are set for the intervention, and specific daily **objectives** are set for each lesson. Objectives are based on **target skills** and should follow the developmental scope and sequence of acquiring early reading skills. (See scope and sequence in Chapter 5.) In order to have meaningful objectives for intervention, they must be observable and measurable. This means that the teacher needs to observe the student doing the behavior and then be able to determine if the student has met the objective. Table 6.1 includes examples of both initial and final objectives written by Ms. Perry after applying the observable, measurable criteria.

TABLE 6.1 Initial and Final Objectives for Intervention

Initial Objectives	Final Objectives
1. Students will know how to blend words.	1. Students will orally blend CVC words with short /a/ and /o/ sounds.
2. Students will understand how to segment four-phoneme words.	2. Students will segment words with beginning consonant blends (CCVC words).
3. Students will practice spelling.	3. Students will spell CVC words ending in -at/.

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In example 1, Ms. Perry initially wrote, "Students will know how to blend words." Can she observe this? No, she cannot see if the students "know" how to blend; she can only see what the students actually do. Can she measure this? No, it is not clear what the type of words or sounds are or how the student is supposed to demonstrate blending. After collaborating with her first-grade team, Ms. Perry rewrote the objective to read, "Students will orally blend CVC words with short /a/ and /o/ sounds." Can she observe the students doing this behavior? Yes, she can hear the students orally blending CVC words. Will she be able to measure this? Yes, she can ask the students to blend words with these sounds to determine if they have met the objective.

Before starting the activities in the intervention, students need to be told the objective in "student-friendly" language. An example of this language is, "Today we are going to be learning how to put sounds together to make words. All the words will have the /a/ and /o/ sounds in them." This explanation aids in making the intervention explicit to students and lets them know what they are expected to accomplish by the end of the intervention lesson.

Principle 3 Choose content and materials appropriate for each student's ability.

In planning for intervention, the content and materials selected must be appropriate for each individual student's ability. Content and materials should specifically target the student's individual needs. Sometimes this will mean that individual students in the group may require different content and materials even though they are working toward the same objective and are participating in the same activities. An example is shown in Figure 6.1. In this group of four students, all students are working toward the same objective—spelling and reading CVC words. Three of the students, including Yvonne, are reading and spelling CVC words on post-it squares and can produce all three sounds/letters. Ben is also reading and spelling CVC words, but since he is not ready to produce all three sounds/letters, he is provided the rime portion of the word on a large post-it and only adds the first sound/letter with a smaller post-it.

Selecting examples for the activities must also be appropriate for each lesson and individual student. If, during an intervention lesson, the objective is for students to read and spell CVC words and Ms. Perry

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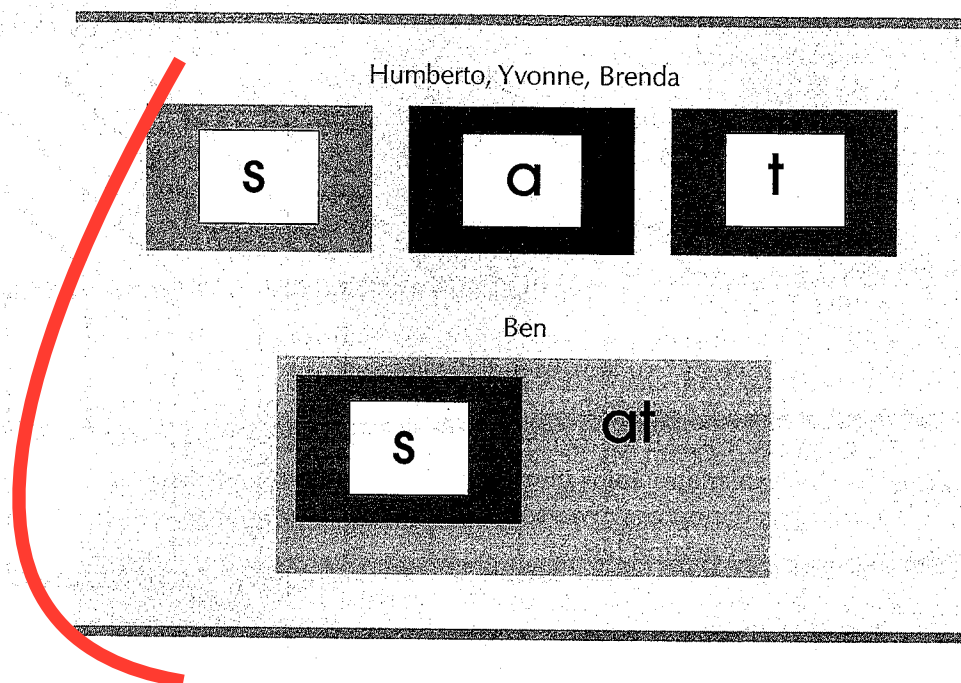
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Part Two

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has only reviewed the letters/sounds *a, m, s, i, t, f, d, r, o*, and *g*, then the words chosen for the lesson should only include words that can be made with these letters/sounds. Table 6.2 contains a list of words that can be used to meet the objective using only the letters/sounds above. In this case, the letter *e* has not been reviewed, and therefore the word *peg* would not be an appropriate word to use for this lesson.

TABLE 6.2 Word List for Reading and Spelling CVC Words

Sample word list for lesson with letters/sounds <i>a, o, t, d, g, m, f, s, r</i>			
-at	-ot	-ad	-og
mat, fat, sat, rat	tot, dot, rot, got	mad, sad, dad, rad	fog, dog

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Principle 4. Teach skills explicitly, intensively, and at a rapid pace.

Teaching explicitly involves several techniques: modeling, breaking tasks and skills into steps, and providing guided and independent practice. First, explicit teaching involves **modeling** the activity by telling and showing the students what they are going to do. In most cases, while modeling the activity, teachers are also modeling their thinking as they are doing the tasks in a "think-aloud." This approach demonstrates to students the strategies that good readers use. For example, when doing an activity in which students have to produce a word with the same onset, or beginning sound, as another word, using the following language will help students develop a strategy for this task:

I want to think of a word that starts with the same sound as *man*. (Use picture for EL support.) *Man, m-an*, I hear the /m/ sound at the beginning. What is another word I can think of that starts with the /m/ sound? Hmm . . . *mouse*, starts with the /m/ sound. *Man, mouse*—I hear the /m/ sound in both of the words. (Write the words on the board.) *Man, mouse*—those both start with the same letter *m*. (Underline the *m* in both words.)

For many average-achieving students, these strategies are learned without explicit instruction, but for struggling readers, strategies will not be learned unless they are explicitly taught. (Refer to Chapter 4 for more detail regarding strategy instruction.)

Second, explicit teaching requires that tasks and skills be broken down into steps. If there are several steps to complete the task, they must be broken down so that the students can be successful. For example, if the objective for Yvonne's group is for the students to read and spell CVC words with short /a/ and /o/ sounds, there are several steps that need to occur for this to happen:

1. Students must know the letter-sound relationships for /a/ and /o/.
2. Students must know the consonant sounds to be used to make the words.
3. Students must be able to segment and blend sounds.

When designing a lesson to meet this objective, Ms. Perry includes activities that provide students the needed support to perform this task successfully. A sample lesson that breaks down these skills is shown in Figure 6.2. This lesson includes an activity that reviews the letters/sounds that will be used in the lesson, an activity that involves segmenting words orally through sound counting, an activity that includes blending words orally, and finally an activity that involves reading and spelling CVC words. The first three activities take only a few minutes each and are included to review the key skills needed to meet the intervention lesson objective—reading and spelling CVC words.

Third, **explicit instruction involves providing guided practice—opportunities for practice with the teacher—followed by independent practice.** Guided practice is a key step in providing the student practice with assistance. After Ms. Perry models the task, she then does several examples with the students. After providing students the opportunity to practice with assistance, they are given several opportunities to practice independently. Included in independent practice is continuous review of previously taught skills. Independent practice and continuous review assist struggling readers to master the skills being taught. Unlike general classroom reading instruction, which often requires that a teacher move on to the next skill before all students have mastered it, intervention is focused on targeting specific skills that students need until they have mastered those skills. Daniel, the student with LD on Mr. Lee's caseload, needs to continue to practice after he has learned a skill in order to maintain his mastery of that skill and to enable generalization beyond reading during intervention time. On Monday, Mr. Lee taught a lesson on spelling CCVC words (e.g., *flat*). He will continue to teach this skill for the rest of the week or until the students have demonstrated mastery of the skill on weekly assessments. Although he will move on to spelling CVCC words (e.g., *fast*) the next week, he will review CCVC words at the beginning of these lessons. This will allow for additional practice and review of the mastered skill.

Intensive intervention includes three elements: group size, additional time, and pacing. To provide students intensive intervention, group size must be small, and **students must have adequate time, in addition to general classroom instruction, dedicated to intervention—namely, 20 to 30 minutes three to five days each week.** To increase the intensity of intervention, the teacher can make the group smaller or add additional time (Vaughn et al., 2007). Intensive intervention also

FIGURE 6.2 Lesson Plan Showing Breakdown of Skills

Lesson Plan

Date: 1/30 Lesson number: 8 Group: 1 Students present: Yvonne, Ben, Brenda, Humberto	Materials: Letter cards Grab bag, with picture cards Post-its Index cards Minutes of instruction: 20
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Objective: The students will read CVC words and spell CVC words using the word families -at, -ad, -ot, -og (Tell students the objective in student-friendly language.)

Reviewed skills: Letter sounds, segmenting three-phoneme words using fingers to count sounds, orally blending three- to four-phoneme words

Word Families

-at	-ad	-ot	-og
mat, fat, sat, rat	mad, sad, dad, rad	tot, dot, rot, got	fog, dog

Lesson

Activity 1 (2 minutes)—Letter-sound review

Show letter card; have students say letter sound and name (*a, o, t, d, g, m, f, s, r*)

Activity 2 (3 minutes)—Review of blending

Grab bag—Guess-My-Word blending activity using three- or four-phoneme words

Pull picture card from bag. Do not show students picture. Segment the word. Students blend the sounds to guess the word. Once students correctly blend the word, show the picture.

Activity 3 (3 minutes)—Review of finger-counting number of sounds

Say a word (*mat*). Students segment the word using fingers to show how many sounds the word has. Have students tell how many sounds.

Activity 4 (12 minutes)—Reading and spelling CVC words

Pass out post-its, index cards, and pencils.

Model: "Today we are going to use our segmenting and blending skills to read and spell words. I am going to show you what we are going to do. I want to spell the word *sat*." (Segment with finger counting.) "/s/-/a/-/t/. That is three sounds. I will put out three post-its. First, I hear /s/. Let me think what letter makes /s/. S—that is the first letter. Second, I hear /a/. I know *a* makes /a/. Last I hear /t/. T makes /t/." (As I say this, write the letter on the post-it.) "Let me read it—*sat*. That is right. Now I will write it on my index card and practice reading it."

Guided Practice: "Let's do some together." Do four to five examples with the students using the same language. Use the word families to choose words.

Independent Practice: Have students do four to five words on their own while you provide feedback.

needs to be conducted at a rapid pace. This does not mean to just "go fast." It means that the pace of the lessons needs to move quickly. This may seem contrary to what many would think, but rapid pacing is critical, because students who are struggling readers have fallen behind their peers, which means that they need to learn much more in a shorter amount of time to get back on track (Engelman et al., 1988). Rapid pace also keeps students' attention. If students constantly need to respond, there is less time for distraction or inattention, which tends to occur more often with struggling readers. To ensure rapid pacing, the teacher must control the instruction by knowing exactly what the goals and objectives are, modeling examples while keeping teacher talk to a minimum, and exhibiting a high level of enthusiasm to hold student attention.

Principle 5 Provide students with opportunities for many correct responses.

During intervention, it is important to maximize the number of correct response opportunities for each student. Research has shown that the more responses students give, the more growth they make (see Box 6.2). Struggling readers, particularly in a whole group setting, either do not take the risk to respond or, when they do respond, often are incorrect. Therefore, during intervention, struggling readers need to have many opportunities to respond correctly. Using the principles of the CIM already described (i.e., stating the objective, breaking down the skills, having appropriate content and materials, and providing explicit and intensive teaching), teachers create a learning environment in which students are participating in tasks targeted to their individual needs and have more opportunities for responding correctly.

To maximize the number of student responses, Ms. Perry provides opportunities for students to respond in a variety of ways. She uses both choral, or unison, responses as well as individual opportunities for students to respond. Choral response allows her to increase the number of responses possible during a given intervention lesson in a small group setting. Additionally, individual responses are needed to determine if a student has acquired the skill being taught. For students who appear to be only imitating others in the group or are not responding during the choral responses, individual responding allows the teacher

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Box 6.2

Student Responses and Growth

In a research study investigating four low-performing students (Richards, Leafstedt & Gerber, 2006), students who showed the most growth during intervention were also those who made the greatest number of responses during intervention. Although this research does not indicate a “magic” number of responses, students who averaged over three responses per minute were most successful.

Students who achieved the most growth responded during group choral responses and individual responses but also mouthed the words or formed words when it was another student’s turn. The study indicated that all students had equal opportunities to respond. Students who did not achieve growth tended not to respond during choral responses or when it was another student’s turn. For these students, it is likely that more opportunities for individual responses are necessary.

to give these students more response opportunities and practice. However, it is important not to discount imitating, as it leads to learning by providing additional practice and keeping students engaged with the learning activity. Ms. Perry also provides opportunities for students to respond either orally, in writing, or by demonstrating through the use of manipulatives. During a given intervention lesson, it benefits students if they have various ways in which to respond. One reason is that it helps to hold student attention during the intervention; another is that some students may be more motivated to respond in one way than another. A few of the students in Ms. Perry’s intervention group are English learners, such as Yvonne. Ms. Perry knows that these students may not feel as comfortable responding orally and do not always participate fully in these activities. Therefore, she follows an activity done orally with an activity in which students use manipulatives to respond. For example, the first activity Ms. Perry does in the intervention lesson is orally blending four- and five-phoneme words. The second activity she does is spelling CVC words. In this activity, the students use letter tiles to spell words.

As students respond correctly, Ms. Perry praises the students abundantly, making their correct response a "big deal." This reinforcement is useful for maintaining attention, but more important, when Ms. Perry praises a student's response, the student is more likely to respond again. She uses praise that is deliberate and systematic. In a spelling activity, Yvonne correctly spelled the word *cut* after she segmented the sounds in the word and counted them on her fingers. Ms. Perry praised her by saying, "Great job, Yvonne. That's right, *cut* is spelled *c-u-t*. I like how you counted the sounds on your fingers to help you spell the word." For students who are low performing, praise is an essential part of intervention. These students often do not receive praise during whole group instruction, since they often do not take the risk to respond or, if they do respond, are often incorrect. During intervention, incorrect responses should be ignored. It is difficult, but teachers should resist the temptation to say, "No, that is not correct" or call on another student to provide the correct response. In the next section, the specific correction procedures are outlined in which teachers lead students to the correct answer.

Principle 6. Provide corrective feedback using the staircase approach.

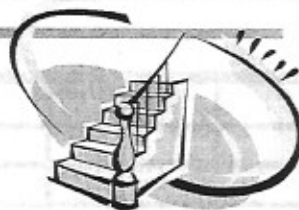
Correction procedures are a critical component of direct instruction models of teaching. In the Core Intervention Model, explicit correction procedures are the crux of the model. Students are praised for correct responses. When an incorrect answer is given, students are led to the correct answer while the incorrect response is ignored. After an incorrect response, students are provided the opportunity to respond immediately to a simplified question or task. Correction procedures involve using the **correction staircase** to correct students during instruction. The staircase approach ensures that students are led to the correct answer and given the opportunity to respond independently to the original task.

To use the staircase approach, objectives must be clearly stated and understood. The teacher must break the objective into steps that will lead the student to the correct answer. If a student is not able to respond to the task, the teacher takes the student down the staircase to an easier task. When the student can respond independently, the

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**FIGURE 6.3 Example of
Staircase Procedure**

Lesson objective: Students will tell
a word that rhymes with a given word.



Step 1: Original question: "What is a word that rhymes with *frog*?"

Step 2: Yes/no question: "Does *log* rhyme with *frog*?"

Step 3: Telling the answer: "*Log* rhymes with *frog*.
What rhymes with *frog*?"

Step 4: Say and have the student repeat:
Say, "*Log*. Good. *Log* rhymes with *frog*."

teacher takes the student back up the staircase until he or she is able to complete the original task. In the example in Figure 6.3, the original task (step 1) is "What is a word that rhymes with *frog*?" If the student does not respond correctly, the teacher moves down the staircase to the easier yes/no question (step 2)—"Does *log* rhyme with *frog*?" If the student still does not get the correct answer, the next step is taken—imitation/modeling (step 3)—"*Log* rhymes with *frog*. What rhymes with *frog*?" Again, if the student does not respond correctly to this question, the teacher moves down a step to simple imitation (step 4)—"Say *log*. Good. *Log* rhymes with *frog*." When the teacher reaches a point where the student responds correctly, she then moves back up the staircase,

stopping at each step, until the student is able to provide a correct response to the original task. In this example, if the student responds correctly after step 3, then the teacher repeats step 2 by saying, "Does *log* rhyme with *frog*?" After the student provides a correct response to step 2, the teacher then praises and repeats step 1, the original task, "What is a word that rhymes with *frog*?"

For struggling readers, the staircase correction procedure is ideal for several reasons. First, if a student does not produce the correct answer, the teacher provides a prompt at the next step, which reduces the cognitive demand placed on the student. This scaffold creates less effort on the student's part when asked to produce the response to the original task. For example, if the student correctly responds to step 3 and says "log," then when the student is asked to respond to "What is a word that rhymes with *frog*?" he or she is likely to respond "log." Second, since students who need intervention are not often praised (because they do not respond or respond incorrectly) during whole group situations, the staircase approach allows students to be praised more often. The teacher provides easier tasks until the student is correct and then goes back up the staircase, praising with each correct response. At times this may mean a student is praised three or four times through the various steps in the staircase. Traditionally, when a student is incorrect, teachers either choose another student to produce the correct answer, tell the student to choose someone to give the correct answer, or the teacher gives the answer. Using the staircase approach allows the teacher to provide prompts and praise in order to support the student reaching the correct answer. Third, teachers do not need to move directly from the original task to providing the answer. There are several steps in between that allow the teacher to provide only the number of prompts and level of prompting necessary to get the correct answer. Finally, if the teacher takes the student down the staircase, the teacher has to go back up the staircase. This creates a situation in which the student is required to respond to the original prompt. Therefore, the student meets the objective of the lesson.



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There needs to be at least four steps in the staircase, and there may be more, depending on the target skill. These four steps include:

- Step 1: Provide a question or task related to the objective.
- Step 2: Binary choice. Offer a yes/no option for the student.
- Step 3: Imitation/modeling. Provide a model for the correct response and then immediately ask the original prompt.
- Step 4: Simple imitation. Tell the student the answer and have them repeat it.

These four steps are shown in the example in Figure 6.3. As the task becomes more difficult, additional steps can be added to ensure that you are using the least number of prompts and level of prompting necessary. (See the blending and the decoding examples in Box 6.3, which includes interactions between teacher and student using the staircase approach.)

The staircase approach is the hallmark principle of the Core Intervention Model and is based on sound research and educational theory. Several studies have demonstrated that the staircase approach to correction procedures is effective for struggling readers (Filippini, 2008; Gerber et al., 2004; Leafstedt et al., 2004; Richards et al., 2006; Solari & Gerber, 2008). Across these studies, the staircase approach has been used by teachers, graduate researchers, and even undergraduate tutors. In these studies, most struggling readers achieved growth and caught up with peers in early reading skills. Why does the staircase approach work? The staircase approach reflects a synthesis of several learning theories but relies most heavily on information-processing and behavioral theories. Information-processing theory explains that every human being has a limited amount of "space," or capacity, to process information (Baddeley, 1986). If a teacher requires a student to perform a task that is effortful—that is, there is either too much information to process or it requires an elaborate response—the student may not have the capacity to perform the task. In this case, the teacher can reduce the demand placed on the student by simplifying the task so that it requires less effort and becomes automatic.

Box 6.3

Teacher-Student Interactions Illustrating the Staircase Approach to Providing Corrective Feedback

Lesson Objective: Students will blend four- to five-phoneme words.

Ms. Perry: Yvonne, what word am I saying? /S/-/t/-/a/-/ck/. (step 1)

Yvonne: Sack.

Ms. Perry: What word am I saying? /St/-/a/-/ck/. (step 2: break up the word into fewer phonemes)

Yvonne: Stack.

Ms. Perry: Great job. What word am I saying? /S/-/t/-/a/-/ck/. (Returning up the staircase)

Yvonne: Stack.

Ms. Perry: Excellent, let's try another one. What word am I saying? /B/-/t/-/ea/-/k/.

[If the student does not give the correct response after step 2, step 3 is to break it down into only onset and rime (/st/-/ack/), step 4 is to give a binary choice (yes/no) question ("Did I say stack?"), and step 5 is to tell the answer ("I said stack.") and then have the student repeat the word ("Stack. Say stack.").]

Lesson Objective: Student will read connected text with words that contain consonant blends.

Mr. Lee: Read this sentence. (Points to the text that reads, "The boys ran fast.")

Daniel: The boys ran f-a-, I don't know.

Mr. Lee: Point to the word that begins with f. Read the word. (step 1)

Daniel: F-a-s.

Mr. Lee: What sounds do these letters make? (Points to st; step 3)

Daniel: /st/

Mr. Lee: Great. Point to the word that begins with f. Read the word. (Returning up the staircase; step 2)

Daniel: /f/-/a/-/s/-/t/, fast.

Mr. Lee: That is awesome! Read this sentence. (Returning up the staircase; step 3)

Daniel: The boys ran fast.

[If the student does not give the correct response at step 3, the teacher goes to step 4, which is a yes/no choice—"Is the word fast?"; step 5 is "The word is fast. Read it."; and step 6 is "Fast. The word is fast. Say it."]

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The staircase approach starts with a task demand based on the objective; then, if the student poses an incorrect response or no response, the teacher simplifies the original demand and provides another opportunity for response. If the student is still not able to respond, a scaffold, or prompt, is provided until the student can respond. From a cognitive perspective, the levels of prompts reduce the cognitive demand placed on the student and allow a response that requires less effort. Essentially, each step down the staircase is a simplification of the previous step and a scaffold for the student (Vygotsky, 1962). The simplification of the steps of the staircase should follow a system of least prompts, which is derived from behavioral theory. This means that the teacher only provides the number of prompts and level of prompting necessary for the student to achieve the correct response (Wolery & Gast, 1984).

Just as the CIM is based heavily on the principles of direct instruction, the staircase correction procedures are grounded in direct instruction approaches to correction (Engelmann & Carnine, 1982). Similar to the CIM, direct instruction models rely on the teacher to control the pace, minimize student error, and have correction procedures at the ready. Direct instruction correction procedures involve the three-step method: model, lead, and test. If a student makes an error, the teacher models the correct answer; then leads the student to the correct answer by saying, "Do it with me"; and finally tests the student to do it independently. The staircase approach enhances this method by providing several levels of prompting to meet the individual needs of students. The "steps" in the staircase provide students the opportunity to be given prompts that they can then generalize to the next task, or demand, placed on them. For example, Box 6.3 shows the interaction between Mr. Lee and Daniel as Mr. Lee uses the staircase approach to provide corrective feedback to Daniel in decoding the word *fast*, a CVCC word. In the staircase, Mr. Lee provides Daniel a prompt to help him blend the consonants *s* and *t*. By using the staircase correction procedures, Mr. Lee has helped Daniel generalize this skill to the next word he reads. When Daniel reads the next word, *nest*, he reads it correctly.

As teachers begin to use the correction staircase, common questions arise. These are explored in Box 6.4.

Box 6.4.

Questions about Using the Staircase Approach

1. *Do I need to use the staircase each time a student makes an error?*
During intervention, you want to use the staircase to lead students to the correct response each time they make an error on the target skill, which is essentially your objective.
2. *I have a student with whom I went all the way down and back up the staircase, and he was still not able to get to the correct response. What should I do?* In this case, it is likely that the task is too difficult for the student. Therefore, you should change the objective for the student to reflect his skill level. If, for example, the original objective was to segment three-phoneme words, the new objective should be to break down the word into onset and rime.
3. *Every time one student has an opportunity to respond, I need to use the staircase with him. What should I do?* If you have a student who is consistently making errors with the same task, then, the task is likely too difficult and you will need to change the objective for that student.
4. *If I am focusing on one student using the staircase, what should the other students be doing?* Once you become fluent in using the staircase, it should only take a few seconds to go through the steps with an individual student. However, this can become a concern in the case of more complex tasks in which the staircase is "taller." One way to address this is to have students pair with each other. For example, if you are having students spell words, have students read the words they just spelled to each other. Another idea is to quickly give the other students a new word to spell and, as they are working, focus on the individual student who needs the corrective feedback.
5. *It is sometimes difficult during intervention to think about what my next level of the staircase should be. What should I do?* It is best to have at least one staircase template for each objective you have in an intervention lesson. Preparing this template ahead of time will give you a guide to use if a student makes an error. Chapter 8 provides several examples.

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Conducting Interventions Using the Six Principles

Remembering to use each of the six principles of the CIM is difficult, especially when first conducting interventions. In our research using the Early Reading Project Intervention, teachers used a checklist of teaching procedures that incorporated the six principles of the CIM (Leafstedt et al., 2004; Richards et al., 2006). When conducting interventions, it is useful to have this checklist at hand, along with a short lesson plan that includes a sample of the staircase. The nine components in the checklist fit within the six principles described in detail above. (See Table 6.3.) The checklist for the early Reading Project Intervention is included in Chapter 8, Appendix 8.8.

**TABLE 6.3 Components of Intervention
and Corresponding CIM Principles**

Checklist Component	CIM Principle
Three to four students in a group	Small groups
State objectives	Specific objectives
Model activity	Explicit and intensive teaching of skills
Break down activities into steps	Content and materials are appropriate
Guided practice	Explicit and intensive teaching of skills
Praise students often for correct responses	Corrective feedback
Provide many opportunities for students to respond	Opportunities for many correct responses
Use the staircase	Corrective feedback
Teach skills to mastery	Explicit and intensive teaching of skills

Summary

The Core Intervention Model has six principles that allow teachers to **differentiate** intervention for individual students:

1. Conduct intervention in small groups of ideally three to four students.
2. Write observable and measurable objectives for each lesson.
3. Choose appropriate content and materials for each lesson and for each individual student, based on screening and progress-monitoring assessments.
4. Teach skills explicitly, intensively, and at a rapid pace. This includes modeling each activity and providing opportunities for guided practice and independent practice.
5. Maximize the number of student responses during intervention lessons.
6. Use the staircase approach to provide corrective feedback to students.