

Fletcher's Place™ Reading and Spelling Program



20 Key Elements of Fletcher's Place and Reading Revolution Methodology



Fletcher's Place™ Reading & Spelling Program

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I. Introduction

This document describes elements contained in *Fletcher's Place Reading and Spelling Program™* for emerging and beginning readers by Reading Revolution. Fletcher's Place is a multi-sensory, multi-media curriculum that incorporates the best of what research demonstrates is effective in “phonics” and “whole language” systems. Reading Revolution incorporates over thirty years of study, development, testing and refinement with over 200,000 students in hundreds of schools across the US. It employs a unique approach that teaches to all learning styles and is effective for all types of learners. The “reading revolution” comes through a series of proprietary steps that, in aggregate, bring together the latest brain research and theories of how the human brain triggers its learning mechanisms.

This program allows for a remarkable, engaging and fun experience for each student while at the same time allowing for rapid integration, training and implementation in the classroom. The program has been tested in the nation's largest and most challenging school district against the best current-market products from the largest education companies. The program received excellent reviews from in-classroom trials but, more importantly, showed a statistically significant improvement in reading scores for at-risk, ELL, and children with various learning challenges.

Fletcher's Place has been refined many times over the past thirty-two years and enjoys success because it contains all of the elements required of an effective reading program. This document describes many of those elements.

II. Reading Elements in Fletcher's Place

The following pages and sections describe how Fletcher's Place contains and implements twenty important program elements that are consistent with the requirements established by the National Reading Panel. Several elements correlate to at least one of the five areas of instruction that the National Reading Panel has deemed essential for reading success: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.

A. Evidence of Efficacy and Research Basis

For more research, please see Research Basis for Fletcher's Place, Data from Four Case Studies of Fletcher's Place, Fletcher's Place Manhattan/Bronx Study Results 2004-2006

Fletcher's Place, Reading Revolution's emerging and beginning reader programs, has been the subject of research studies from the design phase through several years of implementation. The earliest study occurred in 2000 when it was tested in a formal study of over 100 families throughout the United States to document the improvements in learning outcomes for the program. Reading program evaluator Dr. Steven Ross at the Center for Research in Education Policy, University of Memphis, conducted the study. Dr. Ross reported that Fletcher's Place was "effective and highly educationally significant." Students using Fletcher's Place showed a 20% increase in tested reading proficiency after an average of only 6.5 hours working with the program. Not only did students improve significantly in reading and language skills, the study also showed a high degree of user satisfaction. For example, parents reported, "Children enjoyed the program" and "were attracted to its many special features."

During the past five years, the Yonkers Public School District and NYU investigated over 600 students using Fletcher's Place's program in Kindergarten and First Grade. The NYU study showed that students using Fletcher's Place in conjunction with Open Court performed significantly better than students that used Open Court alone. The study is currently ongoing showing broader and more conclusive evidence of the positive effectiveness of using Fletcher's Place as the word study component to supplement the current core program.

Over the past three years the New York City Department of Education has implemented Fletcher's Place, first as a pilot in all five boroughs, then as a whole classroom intervention program. Based upon the exceptionally good pilot results and data obtained during the 2005-2006 school year the City granted a 5-year contract to Reading Revolution in the spring of 2006.

Finally, Fletcher's Place has repeatedly documented pre- and post-testing that shows the program's effectiveness. Three examples are in California:

1. Lodi Unified School District, Title 1 Students, 26-Hour After School Program, 2003
2. Oakland Unified School District, Title 1 Students, 40-Hour After School Program, 2002 – 2003
3. Ravenswood City Unified School District, Title 1 Students, 24-Hour Summer Program, 2002 – 2003

B. Explicit Instructional Strategies

The Fletcher's Place video programs and corresponding teaching materials present explicit instructional strategies in a scope and sequence designed to introduce and reinforce all pre-reading and reading skills necessary for emerging, early, and remedial readers in a developmentally appropriate way. The videos include carefully polished demonstrations that model effective teaching of how to practice skills and concepts through Games and Activities.

Fletcher's Place videos demonstrate effective teaching strategies, including the fundamental steps of teaching, modeling, practicing, and reviewing to assure that students truly attain the skills and understand the concepts taught. The videos explicitly teach all Fletcher's Place strategies and systematically teach, model, and provide practice that makes it easy for teachers to check how students are doing with each concept through a variety of games and activities. Examples include how to stretch out and hear sounds (individually and in words), how to read fluently, and how to ask and answer questions to build comprehension. The Teacher's Manual further describes specific instructional strategies in Chapters 1-4.

C. Coordinated Instructional Sequences

Fletcher's Place Reading and Spelling for emerging and beginning readers presents its pedagogy in a coordinated instructional sequence that is thorough and systematic. The program contains explicit instruction in pre-reading skills, as well as phonemic awareness, sound-letter recognition, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills that are interwoven in each program to promote learning these skills in tandem. Moreover, Fletcher's Place presents each skill and strategy in a variety of ways and in a particular order. The three-part videos for emerging readers help to assure that the sequence is taught in a coordinated way by presenting the pedagogy:

- Part 1. Teaches new or reviews previously learned phonemic awareness and phonic skills.
- Part 2. Teaches new reading and spelling words with the new-targeted letters and all previous letters, develops vocabulary, and attaches meaning to the words.
- Part 3. Teaches how to read, understand, and remember text.

Fletcher's Place is successful because its instructional sequences are explicit and logical, providing firm foundations for students to develop their skills in a natural sequence. Lesson Plan books include grade-level specific skill objectives, lesson plans, and strategies and developmentally appropriate activities for Pre-K through First Graders. In addition, the Lesson Plan books provide cross-curricular activities, and suggested writing projects. Fletcher's Place teaches a coordinated sequence of steps to teach each of the following skills:

1. Phonemic Awareness

- Hear many words that begin with each sound.
- Learn the Sound Movements for the letter sound, calling attention to the exact pronunciation of that sound.
- Learn the letter shapes and distinguish that sound and shape from any similar, previously introduced sounds and shapes.
- Sing a song and dance about the letter sound.

- Use the Lesson Plans to choose classroom activities and Game Book activities to practice hearing and pronouncing that sound, such as *Basket of Fun*, or *Homing Pigeons*.

2. Phonics

- Learn how to build the letter shapes by putting together the letter pieces on the pattern pages.
- Trace the letter shape in the air.
- Form the shape with their bodies.
- Sing about the letter shape and sound.
- Make the Sound Movement.
- Learn the letter shapes and distinguish that sound and shape from any similar, previously introduced sounds and shapes.
- Use the Lesson Plans to choose classroom activities and Game Book activities to practice anchoring the letter shape to the sound, such as *Sound Hunt* or *Alphabet Upset*.

3. Sounding Out Words

- Learn to hold or sustain the letter sounds.
- Add sounds to the Sound Movements while sliding the Sound Movements and slide the sounds together in seamless succession to form words.
- “Sneak a Peek” to look ahead when reading a word by sliding the pointer finger to the end of the word before beginning to reading it.
- Glance at a word and sound it out without looking back at it.
- Clap the stretched out word in a normal cadence three times to make sure students recognize the word.

- Demonstrate their comprehension of the words after they have said the word.

4. Spelling Words

- Action Spell words immediately after sounding them out by:
 - Stretch the word back out to hear the component sounds, and
 - Combine the Sound Movements of the component sounds of the word.
- Learn to spell the word on a whiteboard or paper:
 - Say the word to make sure it is the same word the teacher has said.
 - Stretch out the word to hear all the sounds.
 - Make the Sound Movements for the letter sounds. Clap out the number of sounds in the word. Draw a short underline mark on a whiteboard for each sound in the word. Write each letter in the word above one of the lines.
 - In First Grade, clap the word parts, make the Sound Movements for the single, paired, and cluster-letter sounds and write the word parts.
 - Check that the written letters are correct and in the right sequence by making the Sound Movements and sounds for what was written.

5. Fluency

- Students slide their pointer finger under the letters and words.
- Learn to look ahead at the whole word to train the eyes to move in the left-to-right reading direction, to properly sequence letters, and to move eyes without jumping around the page, or skipping letters or words.
- Learn to look ahead at more than one word at a time.
- Learn to look ahead and use punctuation to enforce comprehension.

- Learn to read with expression that is consistent with the meaning of the word and text.

6. Comprehension and Vocabulary:

- Attach meaning every time students sound out or spell a word.
- Non-readers become comfortable “reading books” by inventing stories to go with illustrations in wordless picture books.
- Emerging readers get the hang of reading books by reading words, and then phrases in the first three books of the Little Book series by inventing stories to go with illustrations and the short text.
- Beginning readers read longer and more and more complex stories with full sentences.
- Read irregular words of high utility in the context of sentences and stories.
- Read riddles, put together story puzzles.
- Draw conclusions, while going on Treasure Hunts.
- Follow directions, while reading fun Crazy Direction cards.
- In Pre-K and K, formulate “who” and “where” questions as they expand their reading vocabulary in the Little Book series.
- In First, formulate “when,” “what,” and “why” questions, summarize, state main idea, give opinions, and make their own “Picture Notes” to show understanding of the texts instead of relying on illustrations, as they expand their reading vocabulary in the Comprehension Book series.

D. Explicit Phonemic Awareness Instruction

Fletcher's Place teaches phonemic awareness, which is hearing and saying sounds and words, before teaching phonics, which is connecting the sound to the letter symbol. Fletcher's Place

provides a wide range of games to practice orally manipulating, substituting, adding and subtracting sounds in word, encourages students to grasp the sounds before focusing on their symbols. In Pre-K and K, during the opening scenes of each video program, Fletcher's Place introduces a few targeted letter sounds and introduces many words that start with those sounds. The new sounds are used in the story 10 to 15 times each before students are introduced to the letter shape.

Students hear and say letter sounds by stretching them out vocally, and then "shrink" them back, saying them quickly. They listen for the targeted sounds in stories, differentiate between similar-looking and similar-sounding letters. This builds strong auditory skills for reading and spelling.

Students also learn the Fletcher's Place, specially designed, and proprietary hand gestures called Sound Movements, each of which represents the most common sound for each single-letter (such as /m/, or /a/), each paired-letter (such as /sh/ or /ai/) or cluster-letter (such as /igh/ or /tion/). Each Sound Movement acts as a strong mnemonic cue to the letter's sound. Sound Movements also remind students where to place their tongue and position their mouth to create the letter sounds accurately. Teachers learn to use the correct Sound Movements as they teach the letters whenever they say the sounds. Studies have shown that students with poor auditory skills catch the spoken sound easily when its Sound Movement accompanies it.

E. Systematic, Explicit Phonics Instruction

Fletcher's Place provides systematic, explicit, dynamic, and effective phonics instruction. The following paragraphs provide examples of how Fletcher's Place teaches phonics.

1. Letters Introduced in a Logical, Child-Friendly Order

- **Easy Letter Sounds.** Fletcher's Place Videos 1 to 5 begin by teaching the 14 easy letter sounds that can be held for a reasonable duration without distortion. By starting with these letters that make sounds that students can "stretch out," students do not need to segment words to hear the component sounds. Because they accompany the sounds with the Sound Movements, they can still count the letters by counting the Sound Movements. Research shows that it is best to start reading words just after learning a few letter sounds.

- For Video 1, Fletcher's Place chose one vowel, /i/, and two consonants, /n/ and /f/. Fletcher's Place teaches these letters first because they make recognizable two-letter words. The quick progression from recognizing letters to reading words and from reading words to reading text (Videos 1 to 3) delights and motivates new readers.
- **Snap Sounds.** Next, students learn the letters that cannot be sustained without distortion called Snap sounds (/d/, /t/, /p/, /g/, /c/, /k/, /b/).
- Snap Sounds are the plosive sounds that must be said quickly so they don't distort and so that students don't drop their jaw and add "uuh." It is easier to read words with Snap sounds at the end of words, such as the words sat, sap, and sad, but much more difficult to slide sounds together in a word that begins with a Snap Sound such as can, pan, and tan. Therefore students practice sounding out words with Snap sounds at the end of a word before introducing words that begin with Snap sounds.
- In Video 8, students learn how to sound out words that begin with Snap sounds, where extra attention is devoted so students can decode and recognize these words effortlessly and quickly.
- Tricky Letter Sounds. Videos 9 and 10 teach students the five Tricky Letters (/h/, /w/, /qu/, /x/, /y/) accurately and clearly, making it easy to sound out words with these targeted sounds. When other reading methods teach these letters incorrectly, it is hard for students to sound out words.
- First Grade Partners and Teams: After reviewing the 26 letters from Kindergarten, First-grade students learn paired letter sounds and cluster letter sounds: Cookie-consonant Partners, such as /sh/ or /th/, First-Name Vowel Partners, such as /ai/ or /oa/, Tricky Partners, such as /ou/ or /au/, and Teams, such as /tion/ or /igh/.

2. Fletcher's Place Teaches Short Vowel Sounds and Lowercase Letters First.

- English words contain the short-vowel sounds 65% to 72% of the time and most text uses lowercase. Therefore, it makes more sense if students first learn the most common sound for each letter, including vowels and start with lowercase letter shapes. Fletcher's Place begins introducing uppercase letters in Program 6 when students will need them to read sentences. The short vowels /i/ and /e/ are the most easily confused letter sounds. Therefore, Fletcher's Place introduces the /i/ right away but saves the /e/ until Program 7, after students have mastered three more vowel sounds.

3. Stretching Out Sounds

- Students learn to stretch out the Easy and Tricky-Letter sounds so they can say them accurately without distortion, as well as hear and recognize these sounds. By learning to say a word slowly, students learn to hear all the component sounds in the word. This process also helps students slowly slide sounds together in order to sound out and spell difficult words. Each time the actors in the videos introduce new groups of 3 or 4 letters, they model how to slide the sounds and the Sound Movements into words. Blending sounds smoothly from the start also avoids the unnecessary and often debilitating step of breaking words into discrete sounds and then trying to put them back together.

F. Students Practice in Texts with Sounds They Have Learned

Fletcher's Place uses a wide variety of text, including Little Books, Crazy Directions, Treasure Hunt Clues, and riddles that contain words that the students have already learned. In First Grade students also read Comprehension books, which are a series of 20 stories which use longer and more complex words to practice the irregular sight words, as well as words with the paired and cluster-letter sounds they have learned. Fletcher's Place materials do not present any words that students cannot sound out based upon what they previously have been taught.

The first three emerging reader Little Books with decodable text are "language development" books in which students read a word or phrase and use the short text and illustration to invent a

story. In the first Little Book, Fletcher Finds Pockets, there are only two words, in and on, repeated throughout the story. In the second Little Book, Fletcher's Present, the story presents situations, which use the concept of cause and effect: "if-then." In the third Little Book, Fletcher Paints Sam, students begin reading phrases in the form of instructions as Fletcher tells Sam how to prepare for painting her portrait. In the first video, students are introduced to the idea of reading text and words as instructional clues to go on a treasure hunt. Students are able to fill in the first clue letter-by-letter as they learn new sounds until finally, in Program 6 and in Program 16 in First Grade, they have enough letters to read the clues and go on a treasure hunt. Programs 7 to 10 and Programs 17 to 20 in First Grade, again build more advanced clues to a treasure hunt in the final program.

G. Explicit Strategies for Sounding Out Regular and Irregular Words

Fletcher's Place teaches explicit strategies for sounding out regular and irregular words and builds word skills by presenting sequentially two-letter and then three-letter words in Pre-K, K and more complex words in First Grade. Fletcher's Place's Sliding Sound Out strategy is the cornerstone to identifying and saying all the sounds in a word while slowly and smoothly connecting them into a recognizable word. In First Grade students learn to use an eight step sound out strategy to read and spell longer, more complex words.

After students have learned to use the Sound Movements to anchor a specific sound to each single letter, paired letters, or cluster of letters, the Sound Movements guide students in the process of sounding out and spelling words. Using Sound Movements in this way helps make the auditory and abstract process of sounding out words more physical and easy to understand. Students then learn to say the word quickly in a normal cadence.

The Fletcher's Place decoding technique, Sliding Sound Out, helps students avoid a difficult hurdle in learning to read that traditional programs employ. In traditional programs, students must break up each word, saying each segmented sound in isolation, and then try to put them together to form a word. By the end of the school year there are typically many frustrated students who have not mastered the skill of transitioning from isolated sounds to whole words.

Fletcher's Place avoids this problem by instructing students to slide, or blend letter sounds together smoothly and seamlessly from the start. The Sliding Sound Out technique helps

beginning readers to decode words by sliding the sounds and the Sound Movements together into seamless succession, blending letter sounds into words right from the first time they say a word. This technique makes sounding out words a hands-on experience and makes word recognition easy so students begin reading words and sentences in a smooth, natural manner.

Finally, Fletcher's Place presents the consonant-vowel-consonant concept to students in an easy-to-remember way (using a kid-friendly ice-cream sandwich analogy) so that the students can understand basic word construction.

H. Teaching Word Families and Irregular Words

1. Word Families – Regular Words

The Fletcher's Place system has developed a systematic and logical approach to sounding out words by their component sounds and avoids the unnecessary extra burden of memorization work required by teaching traditional Word Families. Students who do not have strong visual memories are better off using their thinking skills instead of rote memorization whenever possible. For example, /at/ at the end of a word does not need to be learned as a "Family" or unit since the two sounds, /a/ and /t/, can slide together without a problem. In contrast, paired letters like /sh/ and /ar/ or clustered letters like /tion/ make a new sound when together and therefore must be learned as a "Family" or unit and Fletcher's Place assigns them a Sound Movement.

Fletcher's Place teaches the idea of letter groups (traditionally called "Word Families") through games where students replace first, then last, and finally, middle letters of words to make different words. For phonetically regular words, Fletcher's Place does not ask students to memorize Word Families such as /at/ and build words using these discrete units at the end of words. Instead, Fletcher's Place teaches the students to think through, sound out, or spell phonetically regular words and achieve fluency through games such as *Word Toss*, *Word Olympics*, or *Silly Mixed Up Spelling*, substituting new first letters to create different words that rhyme. This approach avoids the problem of leaving behind those students who do not have the capacity for learning language by rote through memorization. Moreover, it teaches all students to use critical thinking, logic and problem solving, higher order skills that will stand them well over time.

2. One-of-a-kind Irregular Words and Small Groups of Patterned Irregular Words

“Sight word” implies that the whole word is irregular, whereas the Fletcher’s Place term, “Clown Sounds” implies that only one or two letters are “clowning around” within a word. The Fletcher’s Place system does not teach these irregular words as sight words. Fletcher’s Place Reading and Spelling introduces irregular words of high utility in the context of a sentence. This way, students will know if they sound out a word and it makes no sense in the context of the sentence, that there may be a letter that is not saying its usual sound. Fletcher’s Place research has found that the vast majority of irregular words contain one or two irregular sounds, that is, one or two letters that are “clowning around not saying their regular sound, such as the /a/ in the word want or the /al/ in the word walk.”

After students begin to master phonetically regular words, Fletcher’s Place introduces irregular words of high utility that all have a common pattern, for example, two-letter words that end in a vowel, where the vowel says its name (i.e., the vowel says its long-vowel sound rather than the more common short-vowel sound), such as me, be, he, or no, so, and go. In First Grade, students learn many more of these common patterns, such as gold, fold, told or one, done, none.

Fletcher’s Place’s encourages students to discover these patterns found in many phonetically irregular words by themselves so that students do their own critical thinking and problem solving. (For example, once a student reads, “He is sad...” the student must decide that in the context of the sentence /ě/ must be clowning. The student concludes that the word must say “he.” Then Fletcher’s Place asks the student, “If this word says he, then what does this word say (write ‘we’)... and this word, (write ‘be’)?” etc. Fletcher’s Place find these kinds of “Word Families” extremely useful. Fletcher’s Place teaches these as word families in that they are a small group of words that all have the same “clown-sound pattern.”

I. Modeled Instruction at Each Fundamental Stage

Fletcher's Place provides model instruction at all stages of the learning process. When students are introduced to a new skill, the actors in the video and the teacher always model it first. Before the class begins an activity from the Lesson Plans, the teacher shows students the relevant part of the video and discusses it with them. Fletcher's Place also provides in-service training and demonstrations for teaching teachers in which Master Teachers model each instruction with new teachers and go into the classroom to model the instruction with the students.

J. Introducing Passage Reading Quickly with Few Words

With Fletcher's Place, students read letters, words, and text from the very beginning. This is in stark contrast to traditional kindergarten programs where students first learn all 26 letters, then read words, and finally read text. The Fletcher's Place teaching strategy interweaves letter sound recognition skills, word recognition skills, and text skills in each program. Students use a few letters to create and read words and then use the words to read meaningful text. This method solidifies skills and provides great motivation for beginning readers.

K. Explicit Instruction in Spelling and Reading Words

Fletcher's Place teaches spelling as an integrated component of the reading program. Throughout the 10 video programs for Pre-K, K and the 10 programs for First Grade, students develop spelling skills by stretching out words to listen to the sounds and then "spell" the words using the Sound Movements. Spelling words using the Sound Movements gives students a physical anchor for the component sounds. It also helps them choose the correct letters for proper spelling and helps them to sequence the sounds in the correct order. For emerging readers, there are three levels to spelling a word:

- First, being able to "Action Spell" the word by stretching it out, listening for the sounds, and adding the Sound Movements

- Next, by choosing the correct letter cards and placing them on the Word Builder (a specially designed tool for holding the letter cards), and using the Sound Movements, this time, to check their spelling
- Finally, when they are developmentally able, writing the word on an individual whiteboard by writing the correct letters on prepared horizontal lines for each individual letter

The following are the Fletcher's Place ritualized five steps for spelling phonetically regular words:

1. Say the word to make sure it is the same word the teacher has said.
2. Stretch out the word to hear all the sounds.
3. Make the Sound Movements for each letter sound. Count the number of sounds and Sound Movements in the word. On an individual whiteboard, draw a short horizontal line for each letter sound in the word.
4. Write each letter of the word above each of the lines.
5. Check that the written letters are correct and in the right sequence by making the Sound Movements for each letter.

For First Graders, there are two more kinds of words in English, beside the phonetically regular ones that use the above-mentioned Fletcher's Place spelling strategy.

1. Words that are one of a kind, with unique spellings, such as the word friend, or homonyms, such as the words meet and meat. Students learn many ways to create memory hooks for these words.
2. Words that are part of a larger spelling pattern, such as the spelling for the /k/ sound at the end of words, like crack, creek, and panic. Students do word sort games to solve these "mysteries" and explain the patterns.

L. Strategies for Determining Word Meaning

The two most effective strategies for determining word meaning at the beginning stages of reading are the use of illustrations and physical actions.

Fletcher's Place teaches students the meaning of over 300 nouns and verbs that they learn to read through illustration in the video, and by playing games with Picture Cards contained in the classroom kit. Students also learn how to get meaning by considering the word in context with other words in the text.

Fletcher's Place teaches the meaning of action words (verbs) through games and activities that require the student to act out the words they read (Crazy Directions). This approach to action words expands their vocabulary and teaches the students to follow written directions.

In First Grade students also learn to determine meaning by understanding suffixes and prefixes.

M. Introduce Fluency Practice to Build Toward Set Fluency Goals

Fletcher's Place focuses on all aspects of fluency: establishing automatic letter-sound and word recognition, modeling expressive reading of many different genres of simple text, and providing multiple opportunities for repeated reading that are geared to increasing accuracy and smooth reading. Students read aloud to develop precision, proper phrasing, and expression. Fletcher's Place encourages students to slide their fingers under text while reading in order to develop eye tracking and natural phrasing, and to follow punctuation—skills that are all necessary prerequisites for fluency. In addition, Fletcher's Place teaches students to “Sneak a Peek” at a word before reading it to learn to sound out a word in the mind's eye. As they become proficient with looking ahead at one word, students next learn to look ahead at two words to read them as a phrase, making their reading sound more fluent like talking and thus more understandable.

N. Model and Systematically Review Critical Comprehension Skills

Fletcher's Place models and systematically reviews critical comprehension skills, teaching students a variety of comprehension strategies such as how to attach meaning to words, draw conclusions, follow directions, and formulate the basic questions “who” and “where” as they

expand their reading vocabulary in Pre-K and K. In First Grade, students learn all basic questions, learn to infer meaning, summarize text, and state the main idea. In addition, they learn to experience text using all their senses, emotions and actions.

Comprehension skills are first practiced with the simplest of text — individual words. Each time Fletcher's Place introduces a new word, students learn to immediately attach meaning to the word.

When students first begin to read Little Books, they practice making up stories based upon the simple words they read, thus building their comprehension skills. Reading for meaning is built into the texts, which need a response. For example, in reading the Little Book with the “if...then” story, Fletcher's Place asks students to predict what the “then” will be before turning the page (e.g., If it rains, then...the characters go inside.)

As students progress through Fletcher's Place, they learn to follow directions, which is an important type of comprehension skill. Students develop this skill by practicing a game called “Crazy Directions,” which lends a playful tone to this challenging new skill. Crazy Directions are wacky instructions on playing cards that the students read and then act out.

Fletcher's Place uses Treasure Hunts to build comprehension skills. Students watch and “help” the actors read clues to figure out where the next clues are hidden, eventually leading to the treasure. The initial Treasure Hunt in Video 6 uses explicit clues that do not require inference. However, the final Treasure Hunt in Video 10 (and the First Grade hunts) presents three-part clues that require students to infer meaning. Eventually, the students can start on their own Treasure Hunt (included in the kit) that the teacher can set up in the classroom.

Fletcher's Place provides explicit instruction in asking basic questions as students read text; this keeps them actively involved in the story. Formulating questions that answer “who” and “where” is an important part of language development. In First Grade students go on to learn how to ask when, what, and why questions.

Fletcher's Place uses a wide variety of text that is both relevant and playful to develop comprehension. By reading aloud, students apply what they have learned in this (relevant and playful) context, so that comprehension becomes meaningful and automatic. Using this integrated approach, students understand words in the context of a book by Program 3. This success provides great motivation for beginning readers to continue to learn.

O. Includes Writing Practice

Fletcher's Place combines learning to write with reading and spelling from the start. Fletcher's Place exhibits this belief by encouraging students to build and trace letter shapes as they learn new letters. From the first program to the last, students practice writing the letters they are reading using different colored pens on the "Rainbow letter" pages and the "Write it" pages in their Game Books. Students practice writing as they begin to spell words on their own in games like Word Olympics. In addition, each program has a cross-curricular page that includes suggestions for writing projects that build on the themes of that program. Fletcher's Place instructs teachers to provide time for creative writing and for writing in journals. The empowerment of creating words and sentences using the skills they have mastered serves as invaluable motivation for young students.

P. Student Groupings by Ability, Heterogeneous Pairs, and Small Groups

The assessments and progression of skills in Fletcher's Place enables teachers to group students according to performance. Fletcher's Place has such an array of strategies and variations in approach, student groups who can decode more quickly can still be challenged and those groups who need more time do not feel the pressure of being behind. This eliminates both boredom and the tendency of anxious students to guess at words.

Fletcher's Place, however, can also offer an environment where heterogeneous pairing of students or grouping of students can be very positive. Fletcher's Place teachers find that because students learn at different paces and in different ways, students who traditionally fill the role of the "slower" student actually can excel and even help those who have always experienced success. For example, someone who might have relied only on their rote visual memory begins practicing phonemic and phonic skills from the start. This student, who can visually memorize whole words, might take longer to learn the component letter sounds or the Sound Movements, but these skills will help him or her understand how to sound out more complex words.

Q. Guidance to Help Students with Special Needs

1. Supporting Special Needs Students and their Teachers

In schools across the nation, all students are being tested regardless of disability. The success of an individual school is now based on the scores of its entire student population. Children with mild to moderate disabilities have a disorder in one or more of the following psychological processes: attention, visual, auditory, sensory motor, or cognitive abilities including association, conceptualization, and expression. Other students have language challenges, speech challenges, or limited English.

A high percentage of these students present with an auditory processing disorder and therefore do not learn to read at grade level or with fluency, bringing the test scores down for the entire school.

Special education has the highest turnover rate in most districts and those teachers that are hired often lack training and experience. They need an easy-to-implement program such as the Fletcher's Place Reading and Spelling that does not require a lot of coursework, that is strong in service and continuing support, and that provides a prescriptive teaching program with good modeling.

Over the last 32 years, feedback from teachers is that special education students are not able to access traditional curriculum because of their disabilities. Common areas of difficulty and some educational implications are in the areas of phonological awareness, auditory discrimination, auditory memory, auditory sequencing, and auditory blending. To be successful, these students need to access the curriculum through multiple pathways.

The Fletcher's Place curriculum helps children compensate for their processing disorder by using a multi-sensory approach to reading and a structured language approach to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, and alphabetic conventions: spelling, sight words, letter names and print, fluency and comprehension. Students learn through a combination of strategies that include the traditional logical, visual, and auditory pathways, but also include kinesthetic, spatial, musical, and interactive pathways.

Fletcher's Place Reading and Spelling provides important auditory and visual strengthening strategies, which students can later apply to all curricular areas. To train auditory skills, the actors in the videos repeat all sounds many times in many different ways: (1) first in the program story, (2) with a Sound Movement, (3) with the letter patterns to build with the letter pieces, and (4) tracing the letter in the air and on each others' backs. The Sound Movements, acting as a bridge from the sound to the letter shape, clarify and strengthen this relationship.

2. Kinesthetic, ADD, and ADHD Students

For kinesthetic, ADD, and ADHD students, Fletcher's Place offers a wide variety of lively and engaging games and activities to help them practice skills without the boredom and drill that kill enthusiasm. Kinesthetic students are the largest group of students who are missed by traditional programs and are often mistakenly labeled "poor students," "hyperactive," or "just slow." These students are at a disadvantage when they are not physically active, in the same way that visual students may have difficulty focusing if they have nothing to look at or auditory students who may get confused if they have nothing to which they can listen. Fletcher's Place has special learning games that combine physical motion with visual and auditory activities: students handle word puzzles, slap cards, run while saying letter sounds, jump on sound pillows, lead the eyes along text with a sliding finger, sing songs, work alone or in groups, decipher mysteries and riddles, follow directions, go on treasure hunts, bounce balls, toss bean bags, doodle, and have fun!

3. Students with Sensory Motor Challenges

For students with sensory motor challenges, as well as those students mentioned above, the Sound Movements help with occupational therapy issues such as motor planning, sequencing tasks, and organizing concepts. Another terrific way Fletcher's Place combines sensory-motor practice and auditory practice is with unique and wonderful songs. They teach children the fundamentals of reading and spelling while giving students the opportunity to sing and dance their way to reading proficiency.

4. Students with Speech Challenges

For students with speech challenges, Sound Movements for those letter sounds that are hard to pronounce were designed to mirror correct mouth formation and or tongue

placement. For example, to make the /l/ sound, students learn to push their tongue forward against the roof of their mouth and teeth and imagine their pointer fingers as their tongue pressing forward. In addition, students learn how to differentiate between similar sounding letters and the videos show close-ups of mouth position and ask students to use a mirror to imitate the mouth position and the sound.

5. Students with Visual Processing Challenges

For students with visual processing challenges, the Sound Movements call attention to the nuances between different letter shapes. For example, if a student mixes up the /d/ and the /b/, the teacher may want to watch and discuss where Pockets shows how to distinguish these two letters with the Sound Movements. (See Program 8, part 2 for this demonstration.)

6. Students with Dyslexia

For many dyslexic students, the techniques of Finger Sliding, Sneak a Peek, and eye tracking exercises help them learn control over eye movement and correct reading order, and how to sequence letter shapes left to right and read in the mind's eye, so that letters don't "jump around on the page" or get mixed up. Dyslexic students also learn best when they can involve their kinesthetic and spatial strengths. For example, Fletcher's Place Reading and Spelling allows them to manipulate letters and words with ease by handling the letter pieces to build the letters and building the words on the Word Builder.

7. Students Who Have Difficulties Generalizing

For students who have difficulties generalizing, Fletcher's Place teaches all skills systematically, explicitly, and progressively, that is, starting with the easiest letters, words, and texts and progressing to harder letters, words, and texts. No step is left out; students who cannot make the leaps themselves can carefully move up the rungs of the skill ladder without stumbling. For example, after students learn to sound out the word *fat*, they take off the letter card for the /f/ and put down the letter card /m/ and sound out the word *mat*. By watching the videos over and over, they begin to anticipate which letter to change and choose the correct letter before the characters in the video do.

8. Students with Language Challenges or Limited English

For students with language challenges or limited English, Fletcher's Place makes sure students can see, hear, say and do all exercises so they have plenty of opportunity for developing oral language skills. For example, they attach meaning after sounding out a word to show what each word means, and in the first decodable books, they look at the illustrations and read a word or phrase on each page, to invent stories aloud. (Also, teachers can order a Spanish translation of all the crucial words and concepts for each program.)

R. Enrichment Options for More Advanced Students

1. Challenging Advanced Readers

Fletcher's Place Reading and Spelling provides strong opportunities to challenge students who learn more quickly. Fletcher's Place provides several ways to challenge faster students:

- Give them harder versions of the games. Most of the games and activities in Fletcher's Place have a very basic version and more challenging versions.
- Challenge students with a "dare" to make the activity harder. For example, in the game Slam, the actors "dare" the student to not only make the letter sound and Sound Movement, but to say a word that starts (or ends) with that sound.
- Have the student read other texts that challenge them in other areas.

The following activities in the student Game Books are designed specifically to challenge more advanced readers:

Word Maze, Word Olympics, Sentence Puzzles, Fill in the Blanks, Story Puzzles, Silly Mixed Up Spelling, and Match and Write.

Fletcher's Place helps to differentiate learning so both advanced readers and slower students can grow in the same classroom. Children who enter kindergarten already reading will benefit from the Fletcher's Place videos and games. In traditional programs, students who have strong visual, rote strengths often view students who learn differently as not being as smart as them. Fletcher's Place games level the playing field and advanced students see that other students

excel more quickly than they do when they cannot rely solely on their visual strengths. For example, in Homing Pigeons, students must hear the sound they are assigned and find all the other students who are saying the same assigned sound.

S. Ample Practice Opportunities

Fletcher's Place provides students with ample practice opportunities by using games and action for an exciting learning experience and stronger retention of material. Although some educators and parents see games and other play as rewards for skill mastery, Fletcher's Place treats these as integral to the learning process. Games require students to engage both their minds and bodies. The integration of thinking and moving promotes learning, especially for kinesthetic students.

Furthermore, teaching through a wide range of activities motivates students to practice skills over and over without losing interest. Fletcher's Place uses repetition while participating in different activities as an important part of the learning process. This is particularly relevant for those who need additional practice to reach mastery. Children of all skill levels enjoy and benefit from playing games and activities repeatedly.

T. Aligned Student Materials

Fletcher's Place has a complete set of aligned materials, including different kinds of whole class and group games, cards for letter games, word games and text games, decodable texts, and individual activity books with 30 to 40 reinforcement activities for each of the programs. It also provides learning tools and manipulative materials such as the Word Builders and Directionality Arrows. These materials align directly with, and support, the teaching presented in the Fletcher's Place videotapes. In addition, students can bring the lending library of videotapes home if they miss lessons due to absence, if they want further practice, or just to share their progress with their family.