

CAROUSEL of IDEAS

A Comprehensive Language Development Program



Meeting the Provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act*

A cornerstone of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) is that educators should engage in classroom practices that work. The law emphasizes the importance of selecting instructional approaches and materials that are based on scientific research and have a proven track record of success.



What is scientifically based research?

According to the U.S. Department of Education, an instructional practice or program is research-based when there is carefully obtained, reliable evidence that the program or practice works. The Department of Education uses an example of an evaluation that measures a group of children who are learning how to read using different methods, and then compares the results to see which method is most successful.

Why is scientifically based research sometimes difficult to obtain?

The challenge researchers face is that classrooms are not experimental laboratories where they can compare the effectiveness of one set of instructional practices or materials with another while holding all other variables constant. In addition, it is difficult to find reliable, valid, and cost-effective assessments that measure a full range of student ability, including creativity, higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving skills, the ability to work collaboratively, and the capacity to locate, evaluate, and use information.

What does the *No Child Left Behind Act* suggest?

The *NCLB Act* suggests that educators look to the medical arena for a model. The Department of Education states, “Whenever the results of scientifically controlled studies (like clinical trials) are available, educators are expected to

consider their results before making instructional decisions.” However, the law also recognizes that some practices (e.g., reading instruction) have been validated through years of peer-reviewed and replicated scientific research. These findings regarding reading instruction were written into the new law.

What scientific research supports the *Carousel of IDEAS* program?

The *Carousel of IDEAS* program is based on solid educational research and effective practices, including such pedagogical underpinnings as the following:

- **Active Learning.** Learning is most effective when students actively apply new knowledge in meaningful activities that link to their existing knowledge and skill development and when they are working within their zone of proximal development (Piaget, 1969; Gardner, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). The *Carousel of IDEAS* program focuses on active learning and builds from what the student knows to new content the student will learn.
- **Learning Modalities.** Tapping into multiple learning modalities is essential because learners “store” information in various places within the brain. By activating multiple learning modalities (e.g., seeing, hearing, movement, and touch), learning is stored in various parts of the brain. This enables learners to recall the information more readily because they can “find” it stored in many places (*Educational Leadership: How the Brain Works*, 1998; Jensen, 1998). The *Carousel of IDEAS* program emphasizes activities that activate multiple learning modalities—listening, reading, conducting hands-on experiments, presenting reenactments, and engaging in kinesthetic activities—as students develop and refine English language skills.

- **Comprehensible Text Material.** Students must be able to understand the words they articulate in text materials in order for the content material to be comprehensible. Research shows that good readers are purposeful and

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active, and that text comprehension can be improved by instruction. This research is summarized in *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* (2001). The *Carousel*

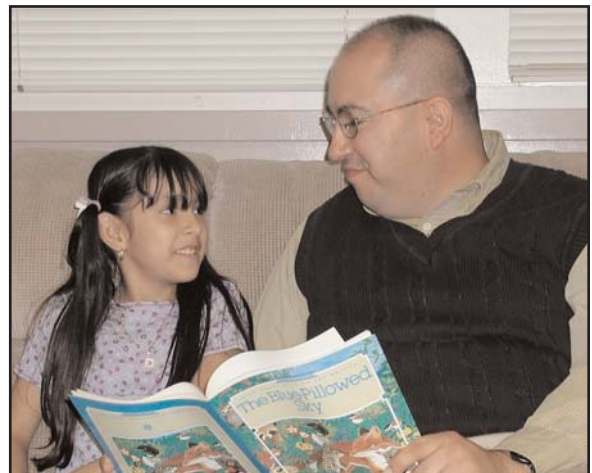
of IDEAS program is grounded in the premise students must have a purpose for reading and they must be actively involved in the reading process. Activities throughout the program focus on the following text comprehension strategies: **monitoring comprehension, using graphic and semantic organizers, asking and answering questions, recognizing text structures, and summarizing and synthesizing information.**

- **Cooperative Learning Groups.** Learning is most effective when it occurs in cooperative group settings. Students learn best when they share information with other students, thereby creating opportunities for students to learn from one another. Teachers should structure cooperative learning activities that enable students to contribute to the collective knowledge of the group and gain understanding by listening to others. The collaborative environment works most effectively when students are engaged in activities that have many possible “right” answers (Hill & Hill, 1990). Throughout the



program, *Carousel of IDEAS* suggests strategies to engage learners collaboratively in a variety of student groupings (e.g., pairs, small groups).

- **Positive Learning Environment.** The learning environment must be positive and stress-free. Pressure and tension negatively affect learning, especially with students who have the additional burden of learning a complex skill (such as reading) in the context of a new language (Herrell, 2000; Joyce & Weil, 1972; Tiedt & Tiedt, 1979; Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard, 1974). The *Carousel of IDEAS* program emphasizes the importance of creating a positive learning environment and suggests teaching strategies throughout the lessons to achieve this goal in the context of developing and refining English language skills.



- **Parent Involvement.** Families play a key role in student achievement and school success. Research on this topic is summarized in *Strong Families, Strong Schools* (1994). The *Carousel of IDEAS* program acknowledges the critical role family plays in student achievement. Throughout the lessons, there are suggestions and activities to involve families in the learning process.

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