

**VRA
001**

**Elementary and Special
Education Teachers
Teacher Certification Exam**

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XAMonline, INC.

Boston

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wynne, Sharon A.

VRA Elementary and Special Education Teachers: Teacher Certification/Sharon A. Wynne. -1st ed.
ISBN 978-1-60787-109-5

1. VRA 001
2. Study Guides.
3. Virginia
4. Teachers' Certification & Licensure.
5. Careers

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Printed in the United States of America

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VRA 001: for Elementary and Special Education Teachers
ISBN: 978-1-60787-109-5

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TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DOMAIN I – ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSTIC TEACHING

0001	Understand the characteristics and uses of assessment and screening measures for evaluating students' language proficiency and reading skills.	1
0002	Understand the use of assessment data to plan reading instruction..	8

DOMAIN II – ORAL LANGUAGE AND ORAL COMMUNICATION

0003	Understand the development of oral language and oral communication skills	17
0004	Understand the development of phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness	23

DOMAIN III – READING DEVELOPMENT

0005	Understand how to promote students' understanding of concepts of print and basic phonetic principles	26
0006	Understand explicit, systematic phonics instruction	27
0007	Understand word-analysis skills and vocabulary development	28
0008	Understand the development of reading fluency and reading comprehension	44
0009	Understand reading comprehension strategies for fiction and poetry	57
0010	Understand reading comprehension strategies for nonfiction	63

DOMAIN IV – WRITING AND RESEARCH

0011	Understand writing skills and processes	74
0012	Understand how to promote students' knowledge of correct spelling, usage and other writing mechanics	89
0013	Understand writing and reading as tools for inquiry and research	114

VRA

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

Sample Test.....	120
Answer Key.....	135
Rigor Table	136
Rationales	137
Constructed Response Problems.....	166

DOMAIN I. ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSTIC TEACHING

0001 Understand the characteristics and uses of assessment and screening measures for evaluating students' language proficiency and reading skills.

Criterion-Referenced Tests

Criterion-referenced tests measure children's reading achievement against criteria or guidelines which are uniform for all the test takers. Therefore, by definition, no special questions, formats, or considerations are made for the test taker who is either from a different linguistic/cultural background or is already identified as a struggling reader/writer. On a criterion-referenced test, it is possible that a child test taker can score 100% because the child may have actually been exposed to all of the concepts taught and has mastered them. A child's score on such a test would indicate which of the concepts have already been taught and what additional review or support is needed to master the concept.

Two criterion-referenced tests that are commonly used to assess children's reading achievement are the Diagnostic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Stanford Achievement Test. DIBELS measures progress in literacy from kindergarten to grade three. It can be downloaded from the Internet free at dibels.uoregon.edu. The Stanford is designed to measure individual children's achievement in key school subjects. Subtests covering various reading skills are part of this test. Both DIBELS and the Stanford Achievement Test are group-administered.

CTPIII

This criterion-referenced test measures verbal and quantitative ability in grades 3–12. It is targeted to help differentiate among the most capable students, i.e., those who rank above the 80th percentile on other standardized tests. This is a test that emphasizes higher order thinking skills and process-related reading comprehension questions.

Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)

This test is targeted to assess how well children understand the meaning of written text in real life situations. This test is supposed to measure the process of children's reading, not the products of reading such as identifying the main idea and author's purpose.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

Norm-referenced Test

This test measures children against one another. Scores on this test are reported in percentiles. Each percentile indicates the percent of the testing population whose scores were lower than or the same as a particular child's score. Percentile is defined as a score on a scale of 100 showing the percentage of a distribution that is equal to or below it. This type of state-standardized norm-referenced test is being used in most districts today in response to the *No Child Left Behind Act*. While this type of test does not help track the individual reader's progress in his or her ongoing reading development, it does permit comparisons across groups.

There are many more standardized norm-referenced tests to assess children's reading than there are criterion-referenced. In norm-referenced tests, scores are based on how well a child does compared to others, usually on the local, state, and national level. If the norming groups on the tests are reflective of the children being tested (e.g., same spread of minority, low income, and gifted students), the results are more trustworthy.

One of the best-known norm-referenced tests is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. It assesses student achievement in various school subjects and has several subtests in reading. Other examples of norm-referenced tests used around the country are the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, the Terra Nova-2, and the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test-4. These are all group tests. The Woodcock Reading Mastery test is an individual test that reading specialists use with students.

Concepts of Validity, Reliability, and Bias in Testing

Validity is how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure. Teacher-made tests are therefore not generally extremely valid, although they may be appropriate and valid in measuring of the specific concept the teacher wants to assess for his/her own children's achievement.

Reliability is the consistency of the test. This is measured by whether the test will indicate the same score for the child who takes it more than once.

Bias in testing occurs when the information within the test or the information required to be able to respond to a multiple-choice question or constructed response (essay question on the test) is information that is not available to some test takers who come from a different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or socio-economic background than do the majority of the test takers. Since they have not had the same prior linguistic, social, or cultural experiences that the majority of test takers have had, these test takers are at a disadvantage in taking the test. No matter what their actual mastery of the material taught by the teacher, they may have difficulty addressing the "biased" questions. Generally other "non-biased" questions are given to them and eventually the biased questions are removed from the examination.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

To solidify what might be abstract to the reader, on a recent reading test in one school system, the grade four reading comprehension multiple choice had some questions about the well-known fairy tale of *The Gingerbread Boy*. These questions were simple and accessible for most of the children in the class. But two children were recent arrivals from the Dominican Republic where they had learned English. Although they were reading on fourth-grade level, the story of *The Gingerbread Boy* was not read in their Dominican grade school. Therefore, a question about this story on the standardized reading test *did* demonstrate examiner bias and was not fair to these test takers.

Informal Assessments

Running Records

A running record of children's oral reading progress in the early grades K–3 is a pivotal informal assessment. It supports the teacher in deciding whether a book a child is reading is matched to his/her stage of reading development. In addition this assessment allows the teacher to analyze a child's miscues to see which cueing systems and strategies the child uses and to determine which other systems the child might use more effectively. Finally the running record offers a graphic account of a child's oral reading.

Generally, a teacher should maintain an annotated class notebook with pages set aside for all the children or individual notebooks for each child. One of the benefits of using running records as an informal assessment is that they can be used with any text and can serve as a tool for teaching, rather than an instrument to report on children's status in class.

Running records are meant to be updated frequently by the teacher so that the educator can truly observe a pattern of errors and provides the educator with sufficient information to analyze the child's reading progress over time. As any mathematician or scientist knows, the more samples of a process you gather over time, the more likely the teacher is to get an accurate picture of the child's reading needs.

Using the notations Marie Clay developed and shared in *An Observation Study of Early Literacy Achievement*, Sharon Taberski offers in her book, *On Solid Ground*, a lengthy walk through keeping a running record of children's reading. Taberski writes in the child's miscue on the top line of her running record above the text word. Indeed she records all of the child's miscue attempts on the line above the text word. Taberski advises the teacher to make all the miscue notations as the child reads, since this allows the teacher to get additional information about how and why the child makes miscue choices. Additionally, the teacher should note all self-corrections (coded SC) made when the child is monitoring his/her own reading, crosschecks information, and uses additional information.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

As part of the informal assessment of primary grade reading, it is important to record the child's word insertions, omissions, requests for help, and attempts to get the word. In informal assessment the rate of accuracy can be estimated by dividing the child's errors by the total words read.

Results of a running record assessment can be used to select the best setting for the child's reading. If a child reads from 95%–100% correct, the child is ready for independent reading. If the child reads from 92%–97% right, the child is ready for guided reading. Below 92% the child needs a read-aloud or shared reading activity. Note that these percentages are slightly different from those one would use to match books to readers.

Literacy Portfolios

Compiling literacy portfolios is an increasingly popular and meaningful form of informal assessment. It is particularly compelling because artists, television directors, authors, architects, and photographers use portfolios in their careers and jobs. It is also a most authentic format for documenting children's literacy growth over time. The portfolio is not only a significant professional informal assessment tool for the teacher, but a vehicle and format for the child reader to take ownership of his/her progress over time. It models a way of compiling one's reading and writing products as a lifelong learner, which is the ultimate goal of reading instruction.

Portfolios can include the following four categories of materials:

- *Work Samples:* These can include children's story maps, webs, KWL charts, pictures, illustrations, storyboards, and writings about the stories they have read.
- *Records of Independent Reading and Writing:* These can include the children's journals, notebooks, or logs of books read with the names of the authors, titles of the books, date completed, and pieces related to books completed or in progress.
- *Checklists and Surveys:* These include checklists designed by the teacher for reading development, writing development, ownership checklists, and general interest surveys.
- *Self-Evaluation Forms:* These are the children's own evaluations of their reading and writing process framed in their own words. They can be simple templates with starting sentences such as:
 - I am really proud of the way I _____.
 - I feel one of my strengths as a reader is _____.
 - To improve the way I read aloud I need to _____.
 - To improve my reading I should _____.

Generally, a child's portfolio in Grade 3 or above begins with a letter to the reader explaining the work that will be found in the portfolio. In Grade 4 and up, children write a brief reflection detailing their feelings and judgments about their growth as readers and writers.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

When teachers maintain student portfolios for mandated school administrative review, district review, or even for their own research, they often prepare portfolio summary sheets. These provide identifying data on the children and then a timeline of their review of the portfolio contents. The summary sheets also contain professional comments on the extent to which the portfolio documents satisfactory and ongoing growth in reading.

Portfolios can be used beneficially for child-teacher and parent/teacher conversations to review the child's progress, discuss areas of strength, set future goals, make plans for future learning activities, and evaluate what should remain in the portfolio and what needs to be cleared out for new materials.

Rubrics

Holistic scoring involves assessing a child's ability to construct meaning through writing. It uses a scale called a *Rubric* and usually ranges can range from 0 to 4:

- 0—Indicates the piece cannot be scored. It does not respond to the topic or is illegible.
- 1—The writing responds to the topic but does not cover it accurately.
- 2—The writing responds to the topic but lacks sufficient details or elaboration.
- 3—This piece fulfills the purpose of the writing assignment and has sufficient development (which refers to details, examples, and elaboration of ideas).
- 4—This response has the most details, best organization, and presents a well expressed reaction to the original writer's piece.

Miscue Analysis

This is a procedure that allows the teacher a look at the reading process. By definition, the miscue is an oral response different from the text being read. Sometimes miscues are also called unexpected responses or errors. By studying a student's miscues from an oral reading sample, the teacher can determine which cues and strategies the student is correctly using or not using in constructing meaning. Of course, the teacher can customize instruction to meet the needs of this particular student.

Informal Reading Inventories (IRI)

These are a series of samples of texts prearranged in stages of increasing difficulty. Listening to children read through these inventories, the teacher can pinpoint their skill level and the additional concepts they need to work on.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

Characteristics and uses of Group versus Individual Reading Assessments

In assessment, tests are used for different purposes. They have different dimensions or characteristics whether they are given individually or in a group and whether they are standardized or teacher-made. The chart below shows the relationships of these elements.

	Standardized	Teacher-made
Individual	<i>Characteristics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is uniformly administered <i>Uses</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is best for younger children• helps with placement for special services	<i>Characteristics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has more flexibility <i>Uses</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assists teaching decisions• used for diagnostic purposes
Group	<i>Characteristics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is uniformly administered• is time efficient <i>Uses</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• permits comparisons across groups• used for policy decisions by administrators	<i>Characteristics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has high face validity• is time efficient <i>Uses</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• informs teach-reteach and enrichment decisions• documents students' learning

Techniques for Assessing Particular Reading Skills

Sharon Taberski recommends that the teacher build in one-on-one time for supporting individual children as needed in considering what makes sense, sounds right, and matches the letters. She notes that emergent and early readers tend to focus on meaning without adequate attention to graphophonic cues. She suggests using the following prompts for children who are having problems with graphophonic cues:

- Does what you said match the letters?
- If the word you said were _____, what letter would it have to start with?
- Look carefully at the first letters. Then, look at the middle letters. Then, look at the last letters. What could it be?
- If the word were _____, what letter or letters would it end with?

Oral retellings can be used to test children's comprehension. Children who are retelling a story to be tested for comprehension should be told that that is the purpose when they sit down with the teacher.

It is a good idea to let the child start the retelling on his/her own, because then the teacher can see whether he/she needs prompts to retell the story. Many times, more experienced readers summarize what they have read. This summary usually flows out along with the characters, the problem of the story, and other details.

Other signs that children understand what they are reading when they give an oral retelling include:

- Their use of illustrations to support the retelling
- References to the exact text in the retelling
- Emotional reaction to the text
- Making connections between the text and other stories or the readers' own experiences
- Giving information about the text without the teacher's asking for it

Responding to literature is one of the most important parts of reading. By the responses students give to what they have read, teachers can determine the level of comprehension. It takes practice for students to be able to respond critically to a text because they have the idea that all published authors are perfect and they should not criticize what they write.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

Some of the strategies teachers can use to provide opportunities for students to give creative and personal responses to their reading include:

1. Reading Conferences—Ask a student to read a section of the text and then explain to you why he/she chose that section. Teachers can also ask students why they are reading a certain book or ask about their favourite author.
2. Reading Surveys—Teachers can devise a list of questions to find out what students are reading, how they decide what books to read, and how students feel about the topics or language used in the book.
3. Daily Reading Time—This could be a set time when everyone in the class, including the teacher, is reading, or it could be a center activity for a small group of children.
4. Literature Circles—Using the role sheets developed by Harvey Daniels in *Voice and Choice in a Student-Centered Classroom*, students take on different roles each day. They discuss the chapter or book, find new vocabulary words, illustrate a scene or pose questions for the group.
5. Reader's Theatre—Students adapt part of the book or story and make it into a choral reading with expression that shows how they felt about what they have read.

Responding to literature does not always take the form of written responses. In a Reader's Workshop, students can choose to respond to what they read by using art, painting, song, dance or any number of ways that serve as an interpretation of the reading. Interviewing the author or asking students to change a scene so the result is different are other examples of how students can give a personal response to reading.

Students who have a hard time coming up with a response would benefit from a sheet listing ideas for ways they can respond. These ideas usually take the form of open-ended sentences such as:

1. The character I liked the best was _____.
2. The character that is most like me is _____.
3. If I were _____, I would have _____.

0002 Understand the use of assessment data to plan reading instruction.

Assessment is the practice of collecting information about children's progress, and evaluation is the process of judging the children's responses to determine how well they are achieving particular goals or demonstrating reading skills.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

Assessment and evaluation are intricately connected in the literacy classroom. Assessment is necessary because teachers need ways to determine what students are learning and how they are progressing. In addition, assessment can be a tool that helps students take ownership of their own learning and become partners with their teachers and parents in their ongoing development as readers and writers. In this day of public accountability, clear, definite, and reliable assessment creates confidence in public education.

There are two broad categories of assessment. *Informal assessment* utilizes observations and other non-standardized procedures to compile anecdotal and observational data/evidence of children's progress. It includes but is not limited to checklists, observations, and performance tasks. *Formal assessment* is composed of standardized tests and procedures carried out under circumscribed conditions. Formal assessments include: state tests, standardized achievement tests, NAEP tests, and the like.

Effective Assessment Characteristics

1. It should be an *ongoing process* with the teacher making informal or formal assessments on an ongoing basis. The assessment should be a natural part of the instruction and not intrusive.
2. The most effective assessment is *integrated into ongoing instruction*. Throughout the teaching and learning day, the child's written, spoken, and reading contributions to the class or lack thereof, need to and can be continually noted.
3. Assessment should *reflect the child's actual reading and writing experiences*. The child should be able to show that he/she can read and explain or react to a similar literary or expository work.
4. Assessment needs to be a *collaborative and reflective process*. Teachers can learn from what the children reveal about their own individual assessments. Children, even as early as grade two, should be supported by their teacher to continually and routinely ask themselves questions assessing their reading. They might ask:
 - a. "Do I understand what the author wants to say?"
 - b. "What can I do to improve my reading?"
 - c. "How can I use what I have read to learn more about this topic?"

Teachers need to be informed by their own professional observation *and* by children's comments as they assess and customize instruction for children.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

5. Quality assessment is *multidimensional* and may include but not be limited to samples of writings, student retellings, running records, anecdotal teacher observations, self-evaluations, and records of independent reading. From this multidimensional data, the teacher can derive a consistent level of performance and design additional instruction that will enhance the child's reading performance.
6. Assessment must *take into account children's age and ethnic/cultural patterns of learning*.
7. Effective assessment *teaches children from their strengths, not their weaknesses*. Find out what reading behaviors children demonstrate well and then design instruction to support those behaviors.
8. Assessment should be *part of children's learning process* and not done *to* them, but rather done *with* them.

Awareness of Text Leveling

The classroom library, in the context of the Balanced Literacy Approach to reading instruction, is focused on leveled books. These books have been leveled with the support of Fountas and Pinnell's *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children* and *Matching Books to Readers: Using Leveled Reading in Guided Reading, K–3*.

The books are leveled according to the designations in these reference books and need to be stored in bins or crates with front covers facing out. This makes them much easier for the children to identify. In that way the children can go through the appropriate levels and find those books of particular interest to them while staying in the level that is right for them to read. These are books that the children can read with the right degree of reading accuracy. When young children can see the cover of a book, they are more likely to flip through the book until they can independently identify an appealing book. Then they will read a little bit of the book to see if it's "just right."

"Just right" leveled books—books that children can read on their own—need to be available for them to read during independent reading. The goal is for the more fluent readers to select books on their own. Ultimately, the use of leveled books helps the children, in addition to the teacher, to decide which books are "good" or "just right" for them.

Levels are indicated by means color-coded stickers. A blue, yellow, red, or green dot sticker is placed in the upper right corner of each book to indicate emergent, early, transitional, and fluent reading stages, respectively. The books are then kept in containers with other "blue," "yellow," "red," and "green" books.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

Other lists and resources other than Fountas and Pinnell which can be used to match children with “just right” books include the Reading Recovery level list. Ultimately, the teacher has to individualize whatever leveling is used in the library to address the individual learner’s needs.

Awareness of the Challenges and Supports in a Text

Illustrations can be key supports for emergent and early readers. Teachers should not only use wordless stories (books which tell their narratives through pictures alone), but can also make targeted use of Big Books for read-alouds, so that young children become habituated to the use of illustrations as an important component for constructing meaning. The teacher should model for the child how to reference an illustration for help in identifying a word in the text the child does not recognize. Of course, children can also go on a picture walk with the teacher as part of a mini-lesson or guided reading and anticipate the story (narrative) using the pictures alone to construct meaning.

Decodability

Use literature that contains examples of letter sound correspondences you wish to teach. First, read the literature with the children or read it aloud to them. Then take a specific example from the text and have the children reread it as the teacher points out the letter-sound correspondence to the children. Then ask the children to go through the now-familiar literature to find other letter-sound correspondences. Once the children have correctly made the letter-sound correspondences, have them share similar correspondences they find in other works of literature.

Cooper (2004) suggests that children can become word detectives so that they can independently and fluently decode on their own. The child should learn the following *word detective routines* so that he/she can function as an independent fluent reader who can decode words on his/her own:

- First the child should read to the end of a sentence.
- Then the child should search for word parts which he/she knows.
- The child should also try to decode the word from the letter sounds.
- As a last resort, the child should ask someone for help or look up the word in the dictionary.

Sample Test

1. **A teacher gives a reading test to her third grade students to determine how well students comprehend the meaning of the text in real life situations, and examine student's reading process rather than the products of reading. What type of assessment did the teacher administer? (Skill 0001) (Rigorous)**
 - A. DRP
 - B. Norm-referenced Test
 - C. Running Record
 - D. IRI
2. **What is a characteristic of norm-referenced tests? (Skill 001) (Easy)**
 - A. They measure achievement using set guidelines.
 - B. Children need to read them aloud.
 - C. Children's results are compared with others.
 - D. They test student's basic reading skills.
3. **A third grade class is taking a standardized test. One of the questions makes reference to the story, *Goodnight Moon*. A few students in the class were raised in countries other than the United States and were not exposed to this book as a child. This is an example of (Skill 0001) (Rigorous)**
 - A. Running records
 - B. Phonemic awareness
 - C. Reliability
 - D. Bias
4. **The purpose of a running record is to (Skill 0001) (Average)**
 - A. Record a student's oral reading on tape.
 - B. Determine which cueing systems a child is using.
 - C. Measure a student's comprehension level.
 - D. Assess the child formally.
5. **While a teacher is taking a running record, the student reads several words incorrectly and goes back and rereads them correctly. This is called (Skill 0001) (Average)**
 - A. A self-correction coded SC
 - B. Incorrect reading coded IR
 - C. Miscue analysis coded MA
 - D. Word insertion coded WI

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

6. _____ is how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure. (Skill 0001) (Easy)
- A. Reliability
 - B. Bias
 - C. Validity
 - D. Informal assessments
7. **Work samples, reading records, surveys and checklists, and evaluation forms are all components of a(n) (Skill 0001) (Easy)**
- A. Holistic scoring rubric
 - B. Portfolio assessment
 - C. Formal assessment
 - D. Informal reading inventories
8. **What should someone using a rubric to score a piece of writing holistically focus on when reviewing a piece of writing? (Skill 0001) (Average)**
- A. The overall structure and focus.
 - B. The spelling and grammar.
 - C. The overall neatness.
 - D. The creativity of the story.
9. **A 1st grade teacher is listening to students whisper read at their own pace during a guided reading lesson. While working with one student, the teacher says, "Does what you just said match the letters here?". This child is most likely (Skill 0001) (Rigorous)**
- A. Having difficulties with comprehension.
 - B. Having trouble with syntax.
 - C. Having problems with graphophonic cues.
 - D. Having trouble with reading fluency.
10. **What do reading conferences, reading surveys, daily reading time, and literature circles all have in common? (Skill 0001) (Rigorous)**
- A. They are all ways for students to offer personal responses to reading.
 - B. They are all ways to increase student fluency.
 - C. They all allow students to choose books they want to read.
 - D. They are all forms of guided reading.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

- 11. When a teacher collects information about children’s progress, and evaluates their reading responses this is called (Skill 0002) (Average)**
- A. Guided reading
 - B. Assessment
 - C. Standardized testing
 - D. Running record
- 12. A teacher keeps notes about student performance each time she meets with their guided reading group. This is an example of (Skill 0002) (Average)**
- A. Informal assessment
 - B. Formal assessment
 - C. Standardized testing
 - D. Miscue analysis
- 13. The characteristics of effective assessment include (Skill 0002) (Rigorous)**
- I. Ongoing assessment
 - II. Authentic assessment
 - III. Independent reading
 - IV. Multidimensional
- A. All of the above
 - B. I, II
 - C. II and IV
 - D. I, II, and IV
- 14. Books that children can read independently are called (Skill 0002) (Easy)**
- A. Leveled readers
 - B. “Just right” books
 - C. Instructional texts
 - D. Emergent readers
- 15. Books that support letter-sound relationships support (Skill 0002) (Average)**
- A. Comprehension
 - B. Literature response
 - C. Decodability
 - D. Oral reading
- 16. What is a strategy that will help children to read on their own fluently and independently? (Skill 0002) (Rigorous)**
- A. Reading aloud with an adult to give them unknown words.
 - B. Having a dictionary close by to look up unknown words.
 - C. Skipping an unknown word and reading to the end of a sentence.
 - D. Only sounding out unknown words letter by letter.
- 17. What is a good strategy to use to help ELL students be successful readers? (Skill 0002) (Rigorous)**
- A. Have ELL students listen to recorded versions of stories.
 - B. Give ELL students books that do not contain illustrations.
 - C. Analyze story events in English only.
 - D. Have students translate English stories into their native language.