

*A Colorado professional learning series
based on the book*

Equipped for Reading Success

by David Kilpatrick, Ph.D.

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Developed in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education



COLORADO
Department of Education

Welcome back. We will continue our study of Dr. Kilpatrick's work.



Module Fifteen

Chapter 13:

Supporting Struggling Students



Goals for Module 15

- Identify the common signs of reading compensation in students
- Understand skill patterns of reading compensators and how to identify them
- Learn how to instructionally address the compensator
- Understand how to prevent reading compensation

Let's introduce the learning goals for Module 15. They include:

To identify the common signs of reading compensation in students and

To understand skill patterns of reading compensators and how to identify them.

Learn how to instructionally address the compensator

Understand how to prevent reading compensation



Profile of a Student who Compensates

- Weak phonological skills that go unnoticed
- Strong language abilities and strong background knowledge
- Reading comprehension skills within the average range, but well below their language skills
- Uses linguistic strengths to cover up weaknesses
- Rarely get “flagged” for extra help
- Don’t usually like to read because of the effort involved
- Often are referred for behavior or writing concerns
- Poor phonemic awareness affects spelling and poor spelling affects written expression
- Their problems are correctable



So exactly what is a compensating student? Kilpatrick presents a profile with characteristics that one can look for:

Weak phonological skills that go unnoticed or undetected

Strong language abilities and background knowledge, but weak phonemic proficiency
Reading comprehension skills are usually within the average range, but well below a student’s language skills.

They use intellectual strengths to cover up weaknesses, thus the use of the word compensator

They rarely get “flagged” for extra help.

Often are referred for behavior or writing **concerns**

Many compensators get frustrated and discouraged about school. They often avoid work. But usually there is a reading problem behind the behaviors.

Lack of strong phoneme awareness affects spelling, and poor spelling affects written expression

They do not perform anywhere near their potential. They outperform other students, even students who are not as verbal as they are.

Their problems are correctable. If they were identified earlier, compensatory behaviors could be prevented.



Common Signs of Compensating pgs. 112 -114



See Table 13.1
Common Signs of Compensation
pg. 113

- ***They have strong general verbal skills, yet average reading skills.***
Students use their strong verbal skills to compensate for underlying issues.
- ***They have weak or non-automatic phoneme awareness.***
Often the reason for compensating. Maintaining average reading comprehension is difficult.
- ***The rely heavily on context to determine words.***
- ***Students guess based on context and have a relatively small sight vocabulary.***
Poor mapping skills.
- ***Forgets previously learned words.***
They haven't efficiently mapped words to permanent memory.

On page 113 in your book there is Table 13.1, which shows common signs of Compensation.

If we are to assist compensators, it is important to know signs for detection:
As we've said before, he often has

- ***Strong general verbal skills, yet average reading skills.*** Students use their strong language skills to compensate for underlying issues
- ***Weak or non-automatic phoneme awareness .***
Often the reason for compensating. Maintaining average reading comprehension is difficult.
- ***Heavy reliance on context to determine words.x***
- This tells you they don't have a large enough sight vocabulary. If they did, they wouldn't need to rely on context. We know that weak readers use context to decode words.
- ***Forgets previously learned words.*** They haven't efficiently mapped words to permanent memory, and so they often rely on little tricks and clues to remember words.



Signs of Compensation Continued . . .

- ***Requires many exposures to words before they are permanently mapped.*** If a student requires 10-20 or more exposures to words, that tells you he is not a good mapper.
- ***Weak spelling skills.***
- ***Weak written expression.*** They may be good oral communicators, but struggle with writing.
- ***Irregular words are harder to identify than regular words.*** Since compensators have small sight vocabularies, they rely on their phonics skills, which are difficult to use with irregular words.
- ***Discrepancies among reading related skills.*** They can display below average PA or phonics. They could also have average to low average reading comprehension.



Requires many exposures to words before they are permanently mapped. a student may require 10-20 or more exposures to words, when students who are good at mapping words only require about 1-5 exposures to permanently map a word.

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They also have weak written communication skills.

Irregular words are harder to identify than regular words. Since compensators have small sight vocabularies, they rely on their phonics skills, which are difficult to use with irregular words. **Once words are in a person's sight vocabulary, irregular and regular words are recognized equally quickly.**

Discrepancies among reading related skills. They can display below average PA or phonics. They could also have average to low reading comprehension. This is usually high enough to keep them from getting extra reading help. Their word recognition ability usually falls somewhere between their phonemic awareness and reading comprehension.

Mental Tug of War

- Because of lower-level weaknesses, compensators experience a “mental tug of war.”
- On one side is their strong language, which is pulling them toward high comprehension. On the other side, phoneme awareness and sometimes phonics is pulling them toward word recognition.
- These weaknesses indicate word recognition is a struggle and in turn, limits reading comprehension.
- If compensators had strong word recognition, they would have much better reading comprehension.
- Unfortunately, many of these students struggle in school, and dislike reading despite their high potential.



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Assessing Compensating

Table 13.2
Skill Patterns of Compensators

There are several common skill patterns found with compensators.

- In the first two patterns, phoneme awareness and phonics are lower than word identification.
- A third pattern shows the student has developed good phonics skills and can sound out new words but does not retain them in long term memory. Weak phonemic awareness does not allow for good orthographic mapping.
- With the fourth pattern, word identification in context seems fine, but reading comprehension is weak. Listening comprehension is strong. The compensator is making good use of context and phonics to read words. His sight vocabulary is limited, and while he may sound fluent, reading is mentally taxing, and he has little working memory to comprehend.

The best way to assess compensating is to get scores from tests or subtests for each of the following:

- 1) Language/listening comprehension and/or verbal intelligence
- 2) Reading comprehension
- 3) Context-free word identification (from a graded word list)
- 4) Word identification in the context of sentences and paragraphs.
- 5) Phonics skills assessed by reading nonsense words
- 6) Phonemic proficiency (as in the PAST)

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(See Table 13.2 Skill Patterns of Compensators)

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Addressing the Compensator

When you discover a compensating student:

- Based on assessments, work directly on phonological skills, and/or letter- sound skills depending on student needs and be sure these skills are developed to automaticity.
- Undo inefficient word recognition habits. Retrain the student to approach words in a way that will promote orthographic mapping.
- Practice the newly developed skills and use activities from Chapter 6 .

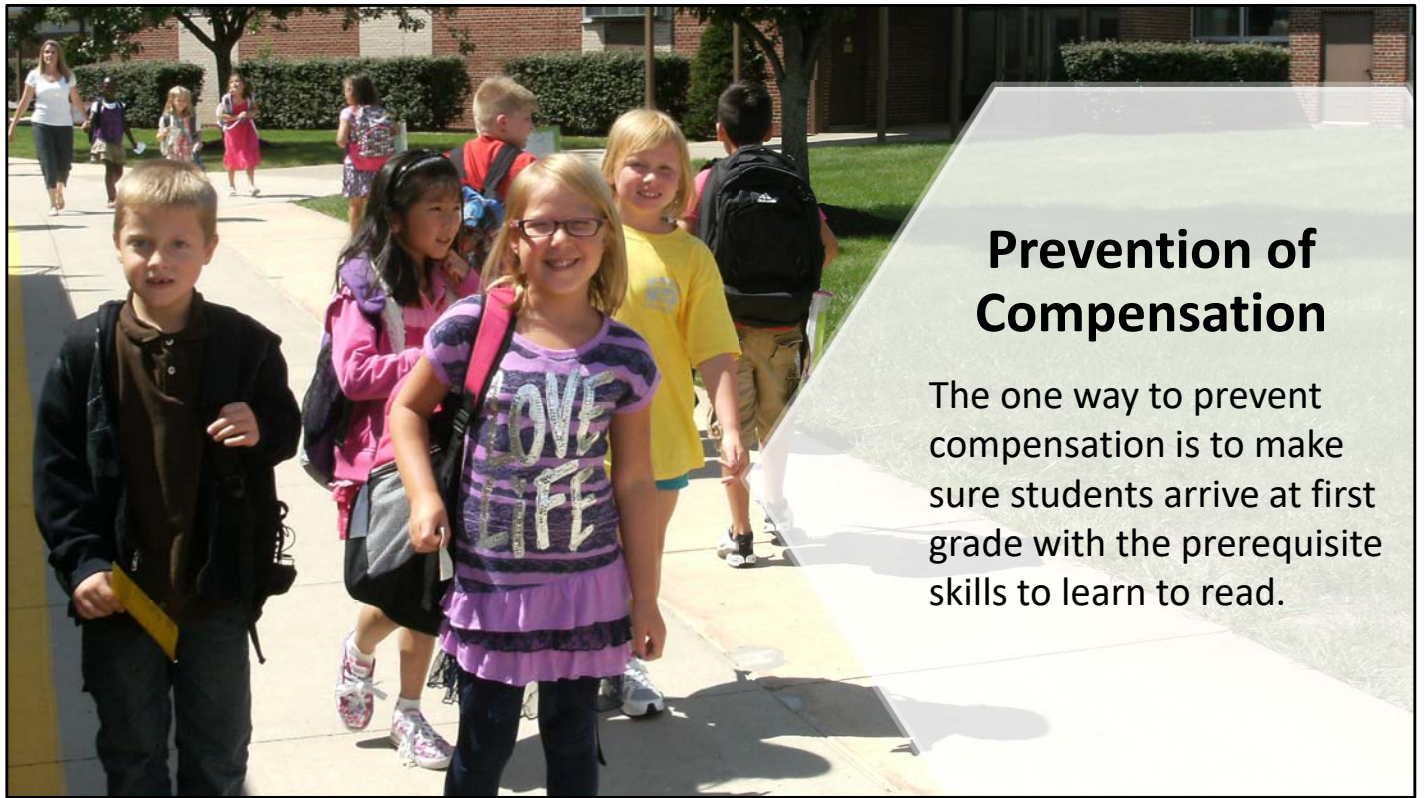


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Prevention of Compensation

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Why?

Emerging research shows students start to *map* words before they can even sound out words.

Researchers created artificially printed forms of real words for kindergarten non-readers to learn. Students knew letter names but not letter sounds and could not read the simplest nonsense words. So, the outcomes were not due to phonetic decoding skills.

One type of word involved representing the word “bead” as BD, and “team” as TM. A second type involved representing “bag” as BG and “toad” as TD. A third type involved visually distinctive and memorable representations of words, not related to sounds (e.g., F for bag)

Students were trained on flashcards using several words.

The children learned the first type of word more quickly than the other two types and there was no difference between the second and the third types.

Why?



Early Orthographic Mapping

The first type was learned more quickly , because it had the **letter name** in it, while the other two provided no useful phonological information (recall they knew letter names, not letter sounds).

- *Bead* and *team* have the sounds of the names of their first letters (/bE/ and /tE/.)
- *Bag* and *toad* don't begin with the sounds of the names of their first letters (/b/ and /t/ vs. /bE/ and /tE/.)
- Since students knew only the letter names, but not their sounds, they used what little phonological information they had available (the letter's name) to remember the words *bead* and *team*.
- The big idea here is that even at the earliest stages of reading development, students find a way to remember words. They naturally connect sounds they can hear in words, to the letters on the page, consistent with their skill level.
- Students with poor phonological awareness and phonics cannot do this well and are behind before they even start to read.

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Implications for Teaching

What does this tell us?

- Consistent with the notion of orthographic mapping, students, even before developing phoneme-level awareness, used whatever phonological anchors they could find to remember words. Visual elements did not seem to help.
- This is true at the earliest stage of reading, and it is also true later as phonemic skills grow. Students who do not have strong phoneme-level skills develop weak, compensating strategies to remember words, because they can't efficiently orthographically map words in the way good readers do.
- When children begin to read and do not possess the prerequisite phonological and letter-sound skills, it encourages them to use compensatory practices.



So, what does this tell us?

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When children begin to read and do not possess the prerequisite phonological and letter-sound skills, it encourages them to use compensatory practices.



To Sum It Up

- Emerging research shows that students start to map words even before they can sound out words.
- Training all students in letter-sound skills and phonemic awareness is critical if they are to start the mapping process which is essential to early reading development.
- Compensators are students with weak phonemic skills and/or letter sounds skills who with great effort, create the impression they are better readers than they are via their strong language skills.
- Addressing phonemic and letter-sound skills from the very beginning for all students can help prevent this compensation.
- We know how to prevent reading difficulties. We need the willingness to apply research findings about how the reading process develops.



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Coming Up in Module 16

Chapter 14: Remediation, Learning Disabilities, Dyslexia and Response to Intervention (RTI) pgs. 117 – 124

- Understanding the Nature of Dyslexia
- Understanding and Dealing with Reversals and Transpositions
- A New Perspective on Word-Reading Disabilities
- EFRS for Response to Intervention and Multi-Tier Systems of Supports



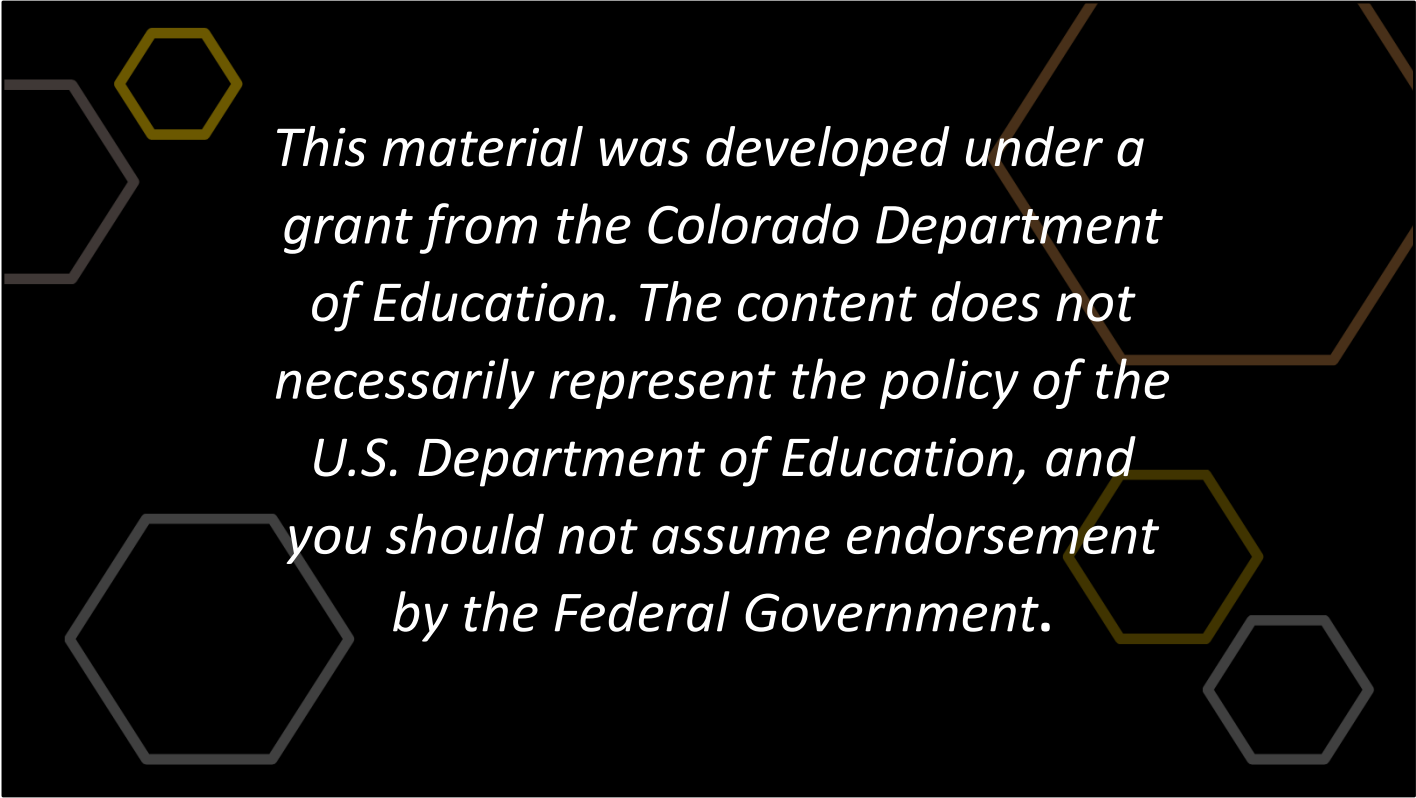
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Understanding the Nature of Dyslexia

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A New Perspective on Word-Reading Disabilities

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The background is dark with several hexagonal shapes in light gray and gold. Some hexagons are solid outlines, while others are partially filled or have internal lines.

This material was developed under a grant from the Colorado Department of Education. The content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



Please visit the CDE Specific
Learning Disability website
for more information:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-SLD>

