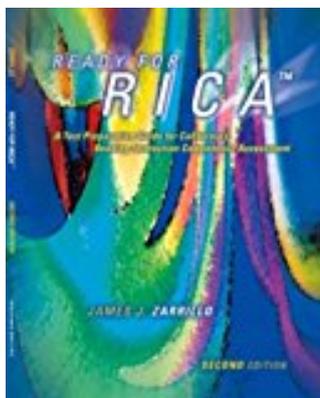


[PDF] Ready For RICA: A Test Preparation Guide For California's Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (2nd Edition)

James J. Zarrillo - pdf download free book



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Description:

From the Back Cover Written for credential candidates who have taken or are taking reading methods courses, Ready for RICA will prepare candidates to take and to pass the written

examination format of the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA). Introduction to the test and test-taking strategies; streamlined, offering the essential information candidates should know before they take the test; a chapter for each Content Area exposes readers to the 13 content areas they are required to know; a sample test, included at the end of the book, with answers, shows readers the type of questions they will be asked and provides examples of good responses. For credential candidates for the Multiple Subject Credential Program in California. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Introduction: The Test and Test-Taking Strategies

If you have purchased this book, you probably are enrolled in a Multiple Subject Credential Program in California. In addition to completing your courses and field experience, you must pass the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) to earn your credential. The purpose of this book is to help you pass the RICA. There are two formats for the RICA, a written test and video performance assessment. This book will prepare you to take the written examination.

There are a few considerations you should keep in mind while you study from this book. It was written for credential candidates who have taken (or who are taking) reading methods courses. This book is *not* a substitute for coursework or a more comprehensive methodology text on how to teach reading. This book is meant to be read as a review for RICA. It is "streamlined," containing the essential information you should know before you take the test. You can find out more about the topics covered in this book, including references to journal articles and books, in your reading methods textbook. My purpose is not to analyze elementary reading instruction; my purpose is to help you pass the RICA.

The RICA is a "high stakes, exit exam." The good news is that with proper preparation the chances are very good that you will pass the test. From June of 1998 to June of 1999, over 14,000 people took the written form of the RICA. Ninety percent passed the exam. Please don't let this high passing rate fool you. The RICA is a difficult test and the high passage rate no doubt reflects the hard work of the people who took it. In this introductory chapter, I will discuss the test itself and some test-taking strategies that will help you to be successful.

An Overview of The Test

There are three parts to the RICA:

- Multiple Choice Questions
- Focused Educational Problems and Instructional Tasks
- A Case Study
- Let's take a closer look at each section.

Multiple Choice Questions

The RICA includes 70 multiple choice questions. Ten of the questions are "experimental," and are being tested for future RICAs. You will not know which ten are experimental, so you must try to get every question correct.

Focused Educational Problems and Instructional Tasks

You will have four essay questions to answer. Two of the questions will require a short answer. The *RICA Registration Bulletin* suggests an answer of only 50 words for the two short essays. The other two questions will require a longer answer. The *RICA Registration Bulletin* suggests answers of 150

words.

The Case Study

The case study is another essay question. You will be presented with test data about a student and challenged to describe instructional strategies that will help the student become a better reader. The *RICA Registration Bulletin* suggests an answer of 300 words.

Test-Taking Strategies for the RICA (1) Don't Waste Time "Self-Assessing" Because You Don't Have to Get Every Answer Right to Pass the Test

One advantage you have with the RICA is that you don't have to answer every question right to pass the test. There are 120 points possible on the test. A score of 81 is passing. That is 67.5%! ! ! So, the following two thoughts should not enter your head: "Hey, I'm doing great on this test," or "Oh my gosh, I'm going to fail." Don't waste you time evaluating your performance. Your attitude when you take the test should be very business-like. Just answer the questions. (2) Budget Your Time

On most timed, "high stress" tests like the RICA, the most common reason people fail is NOT a lack of knowledge. Rather it is from not budgeting the time you spend on , each question. The more questions you answer the better your chances for passing the test. Here is more good news about the RICA. You have four hours to complete the test, and you can spend the time however you want. I recommend the following:

- **Multiple Choice Section: 90 minutes**
- **Short Essays: 30 minutes (15 minutes each)**
- **Long Essays: 50 minutes (25 minutes each)**
- **Case Study: 60 minutes**

So be sure you have a watch when you take the RICA and budget your time If you follow my time guidelines. you will have ten extra minutes to use however you wish.

(3) Develop a Strategy for Completing the Multiple Choice Section

I am of the opinion that on most tests like the RICA, the multiple choice questions are more difficult than the essay questions. So, don't get bogged down or frustrated on the multiple choice section of the RICA. Expect difficult questions. The biggest mistake you can make, when completing the RICA multiple choice section, is to spend too much time on this section of the test.

Answer every question; there is no penalty for guessing.

All multiple choice questions have two parts: (1) a "stem," which is a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph which leads to the (2) "options." On the National Evaluation Systems (NES) RICA web site there are 14 sample multiple choice questions. Once again, NES is the company that developed and administers the RICA. Their web site is <http://www.rica.nesinc.com>. Click on "Written Examination;" the sample questions are links at the bottom of that section. If these sample questions are like the ones on the RICA, they will be fairly difficult to answer. *The "stems" of the questions are very long.* In fact, one sample question had a stem that was 70 words! You are probably used to multiple choice questions with short stems (i.e., "One strategy a fourth grade teacher could use to build reading comprehension is:"). Long stems make for complicated questions.

The *Registration Bulletin* says there will be two types of multiple choice questions. Some will be "content questions," which will ask if you know the content of RICA (i.e., "All informal reading inventories will include the following tests:"). The more difficult questions are of the second type;

they will provide a classroom scenario and ask you to analyze a specific problem (i.e., "Teacher A has a second grade classroom with 20 students. She has assessed her students' knowledge of letter-sound relationships and determined that six of her students do not know the *ph* digraph makes the sound of /f/. She should:").

To conclude, answer every question. Don't take more than 90 minutes on this section. Expect some difficult questions with long stems.

(4) Develop an Appropriate Strategy for Answering the Essays

There are two short essay questions. The essay questions are called "*Focused Educational Problems and Instructional Tasks*." Your answers should be between 50 and 100 words. Take about 15 minutes for each of these questions. There are two long essay questions. Your answers for the long questions should be between 150 and 250 words. Take about 25 minutes for each of the long questions.

All the essay questions present a hypothetical situation. You will get information about an entire class, a group of children, or an individual student. You must decide what an appropriate instructional intervention would be.

Be sure to take a look at the sample essay questions on the NES web site (<http://www.rica.nesinc.com>). Here are some things to remember when you write your answers:

- Answer what they ask, and come directly to the point. The people grading your essays will have lots of papers to read, so don't try to "snow" them.
- Write legibly. Don't expect the person reading your essays to read your essay over and over again to try to figure out what you wrote.
- Your answer should solve the challenge the question presents by:
 - Identifying appropriate instructional strategies,
 - Providing specific information about the strategy as it applies to the question, and
 - Explaining why the strategy will work.

Once again: Identify, provide specific information, explain.

- The sample test at the end of this book has two short essay and two long essay questions, just like the real RICA. The answer section provides examples of good responses to the essays.

(5) Plan Ahead to Use an Appropriate Strategy for Addressing the Case Study

The case study is worth 24 points, one-fifth of the total (120). You will be given "raw" assessment data for an individual student. The data you are provided may include the results of a reading interest survey, the teacher's copy of a miscue analysis of a student's oral reading, the results of the student reading lists of words, and other types of tests. I will review kinds of tests you need to know in subsequent chapters of this book.

The case study on the NES web site asks for an answer of three parts:

- First, identify the student's strengths as a reader. Be sure to cite specific examples from the case study data to support your conclusions.
- Second, identify the student's areas of need. Again, be sure to cite specific examples from the case study to support your conclusions.
- Finally, identify an instructional intervention to address each area of need. Describe the intervention (types of lessons) and provide an example of one lesson. Explain how the intervention will help the student.

Once again, when answering the case study, tell about the student's strengths, areas of need, and interventions to address each area of need.

My advice on the case study is the same as for the essays. Come directly to the point and write legibly. The sample test at the end of this book has a case study and the answer section has an example of what your answer should look like.

(6) Recognize the Attitude of the Test Developers

When you take the RICA, you should adopt the attitude of the policy makers who created it: You believe in a "balanced" approach to reading instruction. As you might know, the field of reading instruction has zealous proponents of radically different approaches to teaching reading. The people who designed RICA believe that teachers should have a balanced instructional program with:

- The direct, explicit teaching of reading skills and strategies. A reading skill is something a reader does automatically. For example, a skillful reader knows that in the word *city*, the *c* makes an /s/ sound. A reading strategy is something a reader chooses to do, like reread a paragraph to clarify meaning. "Direct, explicit" teaching means that the teacher sets the objective for a lesson and teaches it in a pleasant, but no-nonsense manner.
- Opportunities to use the skills and strategies through meaningful reading and writing experiences, like reading library books and writing stories.

When you write your answers to the RICA, do not appear to be "unbalanced." That is, an overly zealous supporter of either side of the instructional spectrum. You believe that teachers should directly teach students the skills and strategies they need to be good readers. And, you believe students should spend a great deal of time reading and writing.

(7) Devote More Study Time to the Content Areas Which Are Emphasized

The Content Specifications for RICA define 13 content areas you must know (this book has a chapter on each content area). The 13 content areas, however, do not have equal weight on the test. Both the multiple choice questions and the essays emphasize the following eight content areas:

Content Area 3: Phonemic Awareness

Content Area 4: Concepts About Print

Content Area 5: Systematic, Explicit Phonics and Other Word Identification Strategies

Content Area 6: Spelling Instruction

Content Area 7: Reading Comprehension

Content Area 8: Literary Response and Analysis

Content Area 9: Content-Area Literacy

Content Area 10: Student Independent Reading

There will be questions on material from each of the 13 content areas. It would be wise, however, to devote more time to the eight areas listed above than to the other five.

(8) Read the Content Specifications. Check the NES RICA Web Site.

Be sure that you have read the Content Specifications for the RICA. They can be found in the *Registration Bulletin*. The Content Specifications are a detailed outline of what you must know. Look at the sample questions on the NES web site <http://www.rica.nesinc.com>. The questions on the NES web site are written in the same format as the questions you will answer on the test.

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) is responsible for the RICA. For

information on the test, click on their web site at <http://www.ctc.gov>.

The *Registration Bulletin* for the RICA is full of important information. It includes the content specifications for the exam. For a copy, call National Evaluation Systems (NES), the company who developed and administers the RICA, at 916-928-4004. The NES web site for RICA is <http://www.rica.nesinc.com>.

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