

Teaching for Comprehension across Instructional Contexts

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A Language/Literacy Framework¹

An organized framework guides the combination of specific, research-based instructional approaches. The framework is based on principles of active learning, specific teaching, and independent applications of important principles. As students gain knowledge and strength as language users, activities and emphases are gradually shifted along this continuum. Across instructional contexts, teachers work with students to develop systems for strategic actions, which they use in increasingly complex ways to process texts with efficiency and understanding.

Grades K, 1, 2

Children in primary grades are involved in a range of interrelated activities for learning about oral and written language, with emphasis on enjoyment, language play, and foundational concepts such as letters, sounds, words. In many ways, they explore and the relationships between oral and written language. The framework is implemented within an integrated 2 to 3 hour block of time.

Language/Word Study

- *Interactive Read Aloud*--Hearing written language read aloud on a daily basis. Use of intentional conversation.
- *Shared Reading*--Engaging in shared reading of enlarged texts to develop knowledge of early reading behaviors, high frequency words, and letter-sound relationships.
- *Shared and Interactive Writing*-- Participating in shared writing, interactive writing, and group instruction to learn how written language works as well as experience the writing process.
- *Word Study Minilessons*--Participating in systematic study of letters, sounds, and words as part of each day's work.
- *Content Area Connections*—Through discussion, reading aloud, and short lessons, students make connections to science, social studies, and other content areas.

Grades 3, 4, 5, 6

In the intermediate grades, the framework expands to emphasize content area reading and writing, sustained investigations or research projects, and reading and writing a greater range of text genre including nonfiction, narratives, and poetry. The framework is organized as three distinct blocks of time, which may be implemented in one 2 – 3 hour period or at 3 different periods in the day.

Language/Word Study

- *Group Planning*-- Engaging in group planning for content area study and other projects.
- *Language/Word Study*—Interactive Read Aloud, Modeled Reading and Writing, Interactive Vocabulary, Interactive Edit, Word Study and Test Taking Minilessons, Buddy Study System, and Handwriting. Demonstration and explicit teaching help students learn important language and word study skills. They participate in a systematic word study program to develop spelling ability and word solving skills as well as in structured learning activities such as editing and handwriting. Through hearing texts read, they learn about new genres and how they are organized.
- *Oral, Visual, Technological Communication*—Participation in a variety of visual and performing arts, including readers' theater, shared reading and writing of poetry and prose, choral reading, public speaking, and discussion.

¹ From Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. 2000. *Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3-6: Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

<p><u>Reading Workshop</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Reading Minilesson (sometimes integrated with Interactive Read Aloud)</i>--Brief, focused lesson on any aspect of reading. ▪ <i>Independent Work</i>-- Independent reading, word study application, writing and drawing, other independent activities at desks or centers ▪ <i>Guided Reading</i>--Small group reading instruction using leveled books. ▪ <i>Literature Discussion</i>--Small group discussion of books that have been read aloud (mixed groups). ▪ <i>Group Sharing</i> 	<p><u>Reading Workshop</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Reading Workshop Minilesson</i> --Brief, focused lesson on any aspect of reading (systems of strategic actions). ▪ <i>Independent Reading</i>--Individual choice; writing about reading in a reader's notebook; conferring. ▪ <i>Guided Reading</i>--Small group reading instruction using leveled books. ▪ <i>Literature Discussion</i>--Small group discussion of books (both preselected and student choice). ▪ <i>Group Sharing</i>
<p><u>Writing Workshop</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Writing Minilesson</i>--Brief, focused lesson on any aspect of the writing process; use of mentor texts ▪ <i>Independent Writing and Individual Conferring</i>--Engaging in the writing process on both self selected and guided topics ▪ <i>Guided Writing</i>--Small group instruction based on aspects of the writing process ▪ <i>Group Sharing</i> 	<p><u>Writing Workshop</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Writing Minilesson</i>--Brief, focused lesson on any aspect of the writing process; use of mentor texts ▪ <i>Independent Writing and Individual Conferring</i>--Engaging in the writing process on both self selected and guided topics ▪ <i>Guided Writing</i>--Small group instruction based on aspects of the writing process ▪ <i>Group Sharing</i>

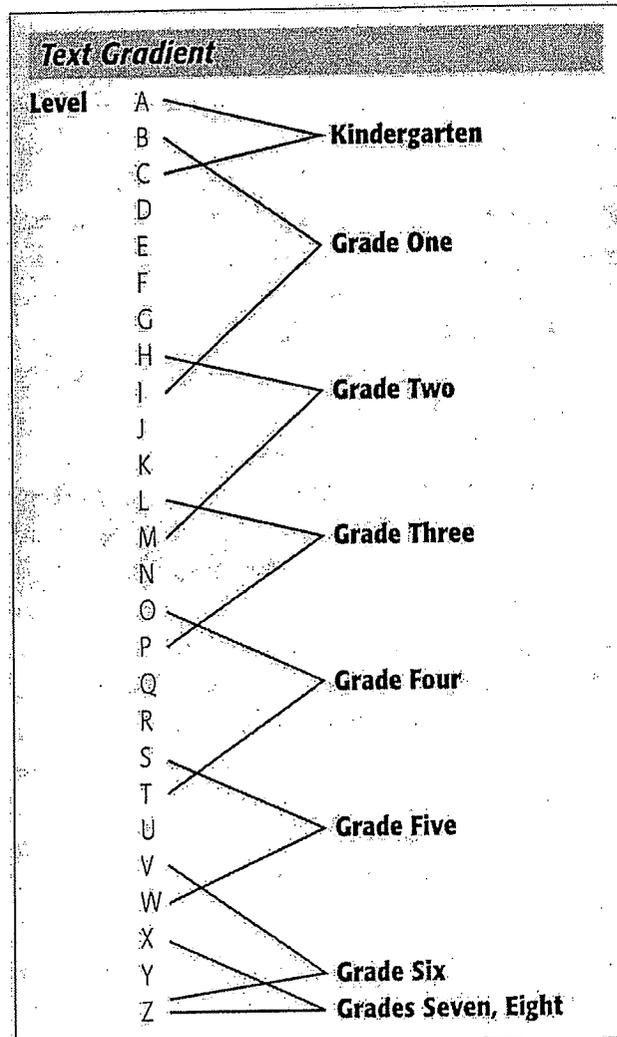
How Readers Process a Text – Comprehending Strategies	
<i>Strategic Systems for Thinking Within the Text</i>	
Solving words	Using a range of strategies for decoding and understanding the meaning of words.
Monitoring/ Self-correcting	Checking on their reading to be sure of the meaning and self correcting when needed.
Gathering	Picking up the important information from print as the eyes move across it.
Summarizing	Putting together and remembering the important information as an ongoing statement of what the text is all about.
Maintaining Fluency	Sustaining smooth, phrased reading that reflects rapid word solving while thinking about the meaning of the text.
Adjusting	Varying reading style and rate according to purpose for reading and the type of text.
<i>Strategic Systems for Thinking Beyond the Text</i>	
Predicting	Anticipating what will follow-0-at the word phrase, sentence, or text level.
Connecting	Searching for, noticing, and making connections to their own personal experience to their knowledge of the world (content knowledge), and to other texts they have read.
Inferring	Thinking about what the writer implies but does not tell explicitly.
Synthesizing	Revising one's own background knowledge as new understanding is acquired.
<i>Strategic Systems for Thinking About the Text</i>	
Analyzing	Closely examining elements of the text to know more about the writer's craft and the construction of text.
Evaluating	Evaluating and critiquing a text for quality or authenticity.

The Structure of Interactive Read Aloud	
Step	Description
Text Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts selected for potential listeners' interest, for quality, and for opportunity to learn. • They may be sequenced to help children make connections
Opening Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening remarks are preplanned. • The teacher carefully shapes opening remarks to: • Provide needed background information. • Ignite thinking. • Plant seeds to come back to in discussion.
Reading/Interacting	<p>The teacher has planned to stop several times (1 to 3 usually) during the reading to invite brief discussion, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make quick comments to the whole group. • Turn and talk softly to a partner or in threes. • Turn and talk softly to a partner and then have pairs talk to another pair.
Discussion	<p>The teacher invites children to engage in a discussion of the meaning of the story, being sure to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide the talk in intentional ways. • Keep the talk grounded in the text. • Help students listen to and build on each others' comments.
Reflection	<p>Often, especially during the first weeks of school, the teacher invites students to reflect on and self-evaluate the discussion, addressing questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did we listen with attention? • Were our comments connected to the book? • Did we listen to each other? • Did we share our thinking?
Extension	<p>The teacher may decide to have students express and extend their thinking through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More discussion with a partner or small group. • Writing about reading. • Drawing. • Research.

A Gradient of Text

“Children can use their control of oral language and knowledge of the world, and as-yet-limited literacy knowledge to move up through a gradient of difficulty in texts. They are aided by teachers who arrange their opportunities and support their efforts. As texts are read and written different kinds of learning are drawn together, coupled, integrated or changed. New items of vocabulary are added, frequently constructed from familiar bits, roots, prefixes, patterns, clusters, chunks and analogies. In the short time it takes a budding reader to read through many texts on an increasing gradient of difficulty...the network of strategic activity gets massive use, expands in range of experience, and increases in efficiency. This happens providing the reader is not struggling.”

--*Change Over Time*, Clay, p. 132.



Guided Reading: Contributions to the Development of Comprehending Strategies

Guided reading is an instructional context within which a teacher helps individuals to read varying texts at increasingly challenging levels.

Element	Teaching for Comprehending Strategies
<p>Introduction of the Text <i>The teacher introduces the text, pointing out important concepts, organizational design, or key vocabulary words in a way that will help students to process with understanding a text that represents greater challenge and one that holds opportunity to learn.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers provide key information that assures that students process the text with understanding. • Teachers guide students' thinking so that they may become aware (or partially aware) of effective reading strategies. • Teachers demonstrate and prompt for deeper understanding and thinking while reading.
<p>Reading the Text <i>Students read the text individually, softly or silently for themselves, while the teacher observes and interacts briefly with individuals.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students apply and expand comprehending strategies by processing an entire text or a unified portion of it. • Students encounter new demands related to word solving, parsing the text into phrases and meaningful units, relating ideas to one another within the text, and understanding the larger ideas and basic concepts of a text. • Teachers prompt for behaviors that they have previously taught and demonstrated.
<p>Discussing and Revisiting the Text <i>After reading the text (or a unified part of a longer text) the teacher talks with students about the meaning, inviting them to make connections. They may revisit the text to search for more information or to find evidence for their inferences, predictions, and conclusions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students give close attention to the text as they summarize or synthesize information. • Students make hypotheses, express opinions, relate the texts to others they have read, search for new information, analyze the text for literary quality, or think critically about the text. • Students benefit from hearing the ideas of others. • Teacher guidance and group discussion support and extend thinking of individuals.
<p>Teaching for Processing Strategies <i>Using examples from the text and observations of students' reading, the teacher highlights one or two important processing strategies, providing explicit demonstrations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher provides explicit explanations and demonstrations of effective reading behaviors related to in-the-head strategies. • Students expand their reading strategies, taking on new learning that they can apply in further reading. <i>The goal is not simply to read <u>this book</u> but to learn principles that can be widely applied as part of a reading process.</i>

<p>Extending the Meaning of the Text [Optional] <i>The teacher engages students in writing or organizing information to extend their understanding, for example analyzing characters or exploring concepts from different perspectives, using graphic organizers, gathering further information, or engaging in extended discussion.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers act on texts in different ways so that they can think more about it. • Readers take on different perspectives. • Readers process information in different ways by talking and/or writing about it. • Readers begin to understand that reflecting on a text and connecting it with their own lives are key aspects of understanding what you read.
<p>Working with Words [Optional] <i>For one or two minutes, the teacher asks the students to closely examine words by using magnet letters or writing several examples on a chart, chalkboard, or dry-erase board. Word work is preplanned and is related to the teachers' observation of the students' spelling and reading skills. It is based on students' needs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers demonstrate principles of how words work in a very specific, explicit, and concrete way. • Students have the opportunity to manipulate words themselves with close teacher attention. • Students learn principles that they can apply in both reading and writing. • Students have the opportunity to become flexible, rapid word solvers.

Observation -- Day One Lessons (Odd-numbered)

1--Rereading

- How is the teacher demonstrating, prompting for, and reinforcing effective processing? [When taking the running record, the teacher will not interact except to tell a word when needed but will make a teaching point at the end of the child's reading.]
- What evidence is there of effective processing?

2--Phonics

- What principle is the teacher helping children to understand?
- What is the evidence of learning?
- To what degree are students engaged?

3 – New Book (Challenge)

- **Before reading,**
 - How is the teacher helping children expand language and vocabulary?
 - What text features does the teacher emphasize?
 - How is the teacher helping children comprehend the text?
- **During reading,**
 - How is the teacher supporting children's processing?
- **After reading,**
 - How does the teacher help children understand features of the text?
 - How does the teacher gather evidence of children's understanding?
 - How does the teacher support processing strategies?

4 - Word Work

- How did the teacher organize materials so that the children work on words independently?
- How fluent were they in making words, taking them apart, and making them again.
- What were children noticing about words?