

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

**Summer Institute
on the
Teaching of Reading**



**3-5 First Year Section
Affiliate 2016**

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Grades 3-5

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An Overview of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) is a research and staff development organization within Teachers College, Columbia University. The goal of the Project is to support best practice literacy instruction through research, writing and the professional development of teachers and school leaders. Members of the Project's current and former staff have written books that are foundational to language arts instruction across the world. Most notably, the Project's director, Lucy Calkins, is the author, or co-author, of well over three score of books, including *Units of Study for Teaching Reading* (Heinemann 2015), the brand-new series that guides state-of-the-art K-5 reading instruction. Calkins and TCRWP colleagues also authored a series that supports K-8 writing instruction, *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing. Pathways to the Common Core*, a book which was, for a time, #7 on the list of the *New York Times* best-selling education books, is also a TCRWP publication.

TCRWP's Ways of Working with Schools

The teacher-educators who staff the Project are involved in long-lasting partnerships with over 800 schools across the United States and the world. The organization's connections with New York City schools are especially deep and broad, involving several hundred of NYC schools. Members of the Reading and Writing Project also work intensively in towns and cities across the nation as well as in far flung places including Israel, Singapore, Sweden, Brazil, Spain, and at least 30 other countries. Of course, many more educators attend one of the Projects institutes or participate in graduate study at Teachers College, so that in all, staff of the Project have worked in long lasting, intensive ways with over 25,000 schools.

Staff developers and Project leaders generally help teachers across whole schools engage in school reform that supports all students becoming powerful and independent readers and writers. In writing workshops, students learn to observe their lives and the world around them, and to collect, draft, revise, edit, and publish well-crafted narrative and expository texts. They learn to use their writing skills to write about reading and to write within every discipline. In reading workshops, students are explicitly taught the strategies and habits of proficient readers. They learn to talk, think and write well about their reading, and to live richly literate lives. Meanwhile, in social studies and science classrooms, students rely on their literacy skills to synthesize, analyze, question, develop and apply knowledge as they are inducted into the world of academic literacy. Our professional development supports a spiral curriculum that provides a consistent infrastructure undergirding language arts across the entire school.

To provide this support, the 70+ staff developers at the Project each adopt a school or a district, and ways of working are developed that will work for that site. Many times a staff developer returns to a school for a sequence of years, working 6-15 days a year in that school to help teachers learn together in "lab site" classrooms where methods of adaptive instruction are demonstrated, scaffolded, refined, and integrated into that month's "unit of study." In this way, participating teachers learn the structures, methods and expectations for a rigorous workshop. In a day of staff development, we are apt to work in three discrete lab sites, supporting three discrete groups of teachers in both reading and writing. First, the staff developer models minilessons, conferences, and small group work. Then teachers and staff developers become co-researchers, observing what students do as readers or as writers, theorizing about the meaning of their behaviors, and planning teaching strategies to help them learn. Working collaboratively, staff developers and teachers assess students' growth as literacy learners, confer with individual students and with small groups, and design small group and whole-class teaching based on students' needs.

This system for providing professional development is not, of course, the only way in which the Project works. In other districts, the Project provides periodic conference days for large numbers of teachers or coaches—usually supporting grade-specific work with the Units of Study publications in reading or in writing. In yet other districts, Project staff take on a particular course of study—perhaps focusing on digital literacy, or on small group work—and support that focus across a sequence of time. In many districts, the Project leads study groups for administrators.

TCRWP as a Learning Organization: New Frontier and Input from Data

The TCRWP is a learning organization, always rethinking the ideas upon which it is based. It is, above all, a think tank. The organization prides itself especially on its learning curve. As part of the organization's commitment to continually research and improve our own practices, the Project staff spends almost every Thursday studying together. These Thursdays allow Project staff to stand on each other's shoulders and to consolidate knowledge so that the work one person

does is aligned to (and informed by) the larger community's work, creating consistency. The staff of our organization has met on Thursdays for the past 30 years. These "Thursdays" are at the heart of the Project.

The Project also uses data and new theories to deepen and refine the approaches it supports, and synthesizing the knowledge of its diverse members. Recently, the organization has especially focused on data-based instruction, alignment to global standards, content area literacy, teacher effectiveness frameworks, inclusion, and using formative assessments to support students' progress along learning pathways. The organization's newest work focuses on digital literacy. The work that the TCRWP does in any one particular site cumulates with all the organization does in other sites—the entire organization functions as a close-knit community of practice. Most of the Project's work leads to publications or to the development of resources that are widely shared among all participants. Member schools are given access to many resources, including assessment tools, book lists alongside methods for ordering those books at discount prices, and most of all, a curriculum for teaching reading and writing in kindergarten through eighth grades.

The TCRWP's work relies on continual input from both formal and informal assessments, and our results on high stakes assessments—which are very good—are described on the Project website. The organization provides member schools with assessment tools, including for some of our schools, a web-based software system that allows schools to track learners' progress, to synthesize data across entire schools, to track the progress of particular sub-groups, to compare and contrast progress across years, classrooms, sub-groups and so forth. This software system, AssessmentPro, has been endorsed by the NYC Department of Education as one of the city's official assessment-options, and is the assessment-system of choice for over half of New York City's elementary schools and many secondary schools. Meanwhile, this tool has already provided the organization with substantial, detailed data as well as with methods for synthesizing those data and discerning trends; insights from the data are regularly used to inform revisions of the organization's methods and curriculum. Every spring, the TCRWP staff overhauls 800 pages of curricular resources known as "the curricular calendars" so that these resources contain insights harvested from the latest work the Project's staff and its partner schools have been doing.

Conference Days, Institutes, Graduate Study

The Project offers over well over 120 full-day conferences on-site at Teachers College throughout the school year. Some of the conferences are aligned with the unit of study that TCRWP teachers are leading at that time in their classrooms. There is also a strand of conference days designed for teachers in inclusive classrooms, for teachers whose classrooms brim with ELLs. The TCRWP regularly brings literacy colleagues from across the country to join us in leading some of these days. Speakers in 2016-17 include Donalyn Miller, Stephanie Harvey, Lori Helman, Nancy Anderson, and Georgia Heard. These conference days are sometimes open to school with whom TCRWP partners and to schools around the country.

The Project also leads two giant conference days that are open to anyone for no cost—known as "Saturday Reunion" days or just "Saturdays." For two Saturdays a year, we open our doors. More than 3,000 educators come to each of these days. Dav Pilkey will join all the TCRWP staff and a host of other national literacy leaders to lead the 91st Annual Fall Saturday Reunion, on October 22, 2016. Our Spring Saturday Reunion will be held on March 18, 2017. Participants can learn more about these Saturdays through the website—but know you are invited, at no cost, to these days which have over 100 workshops and keynotes.

The TCRWP also offers many one-day seminars for reading or writing across the country. These are led by Lucy Calkins, Amanda Hartman, Mary Ehrenworth, Kathleen Tolan, Shanna Schwartz, Natalie Louis, and other TCRWP colleagues. Some of these are designed to help teachers learn how to use the new *Units of Study for Teaching Reading* or *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* to reach ambitious new global standards. Other one day seminars address timely topics of special interest.

Twice a year, the Project leads an institute for several hundred literacy coaches from across the country. These two institutes are especially intensive, with small groups of participants working together, and the institutes involve in-classroom work in 20+ New York City schools. The Project also leads a late February small groups and conferring institute devoted to helping k-8 educators bring state-of-the-art methods of supporting reading and writing. Participants will learn about small group work, collaborative inquiry and new work with research centers. This institute is designed to help you to maximize your conferring time and make your small-group work more efficient, more powerful, and easier.

A core group of 200 principals and superintendents attend monthly conferences at Teachers College. Keynote speakers in recent years included Michael Fullan, Tony Wagner, Charlotte Danielson, Pedro Noguera, Grant Wiggins, David Rock, Diane Ravitch, Andy Hargreaves, and others. After the keynote, principals disperse into study groups. The TCRWP welcomes visiting principals or superintendents (from Project schools) to these days, as long as space permits.

The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project is also closely linked to the Literacy Specialist Masters Program and to the doctoral program within Teachers College's Department of Curriculum and Teaching. The Literacy Specialist Program is co-directed by Lucy Calkins and Marjorie Siegel. This program and the doctoral program provide a pipeline, bringing smart, dedicated teachers and literacy specialists to schools as interns, teachers, literacy coaches, and eventually these people sometimes may become TCRWP staff developers.

The Project's Leaders

The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project is directed by its founder, Lucy Calkins, the Richard Robinson Professor of Children's Literature at Teachers College. Senior Deputy Director Laurie Pessah leads the organization's work with school leaders, including those at the Department of Education, staffs the school-based professional development work, oversees allocation of resources, and helps support primary literacy. Senior Deputy Director Kathleen Tolan leads most of the TCRWP's institutes, mentors teacher-leaders, school administrators, and staff developers with special emphasis on upper grade reading. Mary Ehrenworth, Deputy Director, takes a lead role in developing materials, ideas, and relationships with other organizations. As Deputy Director for Primary, Amanda Hartman directs the TCRWP's work with primary literacy, coaches, staff developers, and leads work supporting ELLs. Audra Robb leads the TCRWP's work with middle school. Beth Neville is Associate Director of the Project and oversees technology, finances, and special projects. Judy Chin is Coordinator of Strategic Development and a Regent for the New York State Education Department. Kathy Neville works with Laurie Pessah to coordinate the Reading and Writing Project's connections with schools across the world. Other staff members have leadership roles as well—leading the events, the office staff, performance assessments, research, publications, and functioning as Senior Lead Staff Developers. Biographies are included on the Project's web site.

2016-17 Suggested Sequence of Units of Study

Third Grade		
Month	Reading	Writing
Sept-Oct	Builing a Reading Life (Book 1)	Crafting True Stories (Book 1)
Oct-Nov	Mystery: Foundational Skills in Disguise (New Book in 2016)	The Art of Information Writing (Book 2)
Nov-Dec	Reading to Learn: Grasping Main Ideas and Text Structures (Book 2)	Changing the World: Persuasive Speeches, Petitions, and Editorials (Book 3)
Jan 3-9	Optional Weeklong Intensive (i.e.: Greening the School, etc.)	
Jan-Feb	Character Studies (Book 3)	Baby Literary Essay (<i>If...Then...</i>)
March	Test Prep./Unit of Your Choice	
April-May	Research Clubs: Elephants, Penguins, and Frogs, Oh My!: (Book 4)	Writing About Research
May-June	Design Your Own Unit OR Learning From Countries Around the World (<i>If...Then...</i>)	Once Upon a Time: Adapting and Writing Fairy Tales (Book 4) OR Design Your Own Unit

Fourth Grade		
Month	Reading	Writing
Sept-Oct	Interpreting Characters: The Heart of the Story (Book 1)	The Arc of Story: Writing Realistic Fiction (Book 1)
Oct-Nov	Reading the Weather, Reading the World (Book 2)	Boxes and Bullets: Personal and Persuasive Essays (Book 2)
Nov-Dec	Historical Fiction Clubs (Book 4)	Historical Fiction Writing (<i>If...Then...</i>) OR Design Your Own Unit
Jan 3-9	Optional Weeklong Intensive (i.e.: Greening the School, etc.)	
Jan-Feb	Interpretation Book Clubs	The Literary Essay: Writing About Fiction (Book 4)
March	Test Prep./ Unit of Your Choice	
April-May	Reading History: The American Revolution (Book 3)	Bringing History to Life (Book 3)
May-June	Nonfiction Book Clubs: Author Studies OR Interpretation Book Clubs (<i>If...Then...</i>)	Journalism (<i>If...Then...</i>)

Fifth Grade		
Month	Reading	Writing
Sept-Oct	Interpretation Book Clubs: Analyzing Themes (Book 1) OR Character Studies (Grade 3, Book 3; If you make this choice it will impact Jan-Feb below.)	Narrative Craft (Book 1)
Oct-Nov	Tackling Complexity: Moving Up Levels of Nonfiction (Book 2)	Feature Articles (<i>If...Then...</i>)
Nov-Dec	Argument and Advocacy: Researching Debatable Issues (Book 3)	The Research-Based Argument Essay (Book 3)
Jan 3-9	Optional Weeklong Intensive (i.e.: Greening the School, etc.)	
Jan-Feb	Reading Like a Fan OR Interpretation Book Clubs: Analyzing Themes (Book 1)	Literary Essay: Opening Texts and Seeing More (New Book in 2016)
March	Test Prep./ Unit of Your Choice	
April-May	Reading in the Content Area	The Lens of History: Research Reports (Book 2)
May-June	Fantasy Book Clubs: The Magic of Themes and Symbols – (Book 4)	Shaping Texts: From Essay and Narrative to Memoir –(Book 4)

Components of Balanced Literacy

Reading Workshop

The reading workshop is one component of a balanced reading program. The reading workshop is comprised of a minilesson, student reading time, a mid-workshop teaching point, and a teaching share time. Balanced Literacy also includes phonics, interactive read-aloud and a writing workshop.

Minilesson: Reading workshop begins with students gathering in the classroom meeting area for a short (10 minute) minilesson. During the minilesson, we clearly state the teaching point and then involve the students in thinking with us as we demonstrate exactly what we want students to learn to do as readers. Students then have an opportunity to practice the skill or strategy during the minilesson, while receiving support. Later, readers will draw on this strategy independently, as needed. This follows the release of responsibility model for instruction. A teacher might, for example, determine that many students are having difficulty reading with fluency and therefore decide to teach them how to take in more of a sentence when they read. On a subsequent day, the teacher might help students realize that readers actually try to visually take in all of the words before the next piece of punctuation. In this way, one minilesson dovetails with the next so as to provide a series of progressively more complex instruction. Other minilessons will support students as they progress towards other proficiencies.

Student Reading Time with Conferring and Small Group Work: In most sixty minute reading workshops, teachers divide the work time between private time, when students read quietly to themselves (40 min.) and partner time, when students meet to talk with their reading partners (5-10 min.) or book clubs (10-20 min.). After the minilesson, students read self-selected just-right books. They read privately and quietly while the teacher moves around the classroom, conferring with individuals, or meeting with partnerships or clubs. The teacher will also be apt to lead a guided reading group and/or one or more strategy lessons during this time.

Mid-Workshop Teaching Point: Often in the midst of a workshop, we convene students' attention to give a quick pointer in response to a shared problem we're seeing or to share an example of what one reader has done that might help others. These mid-workshop teaching points can also allow us to correct a misconception, to remind students of a previous day's lesson that has special relevance, to instruct students about their upcoming partner work, or to rally readers to work harder or longer. The mid-workshop teaching point usually takes no longer than a few minutes, during which students generally stay in their reading spots rather than reconvene in the meeting area.

Teaching Share/Partner/Book Clubs: At the end of the workshop (after reading time), the teacher brings closure to the day's work. This time is used to share ways in which students have incorporated that day's minilesson into their work and to share their new insights or discoveries. The teacher sometimes retells a conference or asks a student to share his or her reading work. The share session functions almost as a separate and smaller minilesson. It may arise from a particular conference in which the teacher notices a student doing strong reading work that merits being shared with the rest of the students. The share usually lasts no longer than 5 (generally 2) minutes and sometimes leads into (or frames) partnership or book club time. Students are matched in homogeneous partnerships (unless they are in book clubs) and meet with their partners almost every day, usually as part of share time. Ideally, partners read the same text during this reading time. This makes it likely that they will talk in ways that support each other's comprehension of those shared texts. Often, however, classrooms don't have duplicates of books, and therefore this isn't possible. In these instances, students swap books with partners and (if possible) read within the same series or books by the same author.

Writing Workshop

The writing workshop, a daily component of balanced literacy, generally follows the same format as the reading workshop. It begins with a minilesson and is followed by independent writing time. During this time, students write about self-selected topics as the teacher confers with individuals or pulls

together small groups of students who need the same kind of support. The teacher often stops the class to make a mid-workshop teaching point. Students then return to their writing. At the end of writing workshop, there is a teaching share led by the teacher, which often sets up partnership sharing.

Small Group Instruction

In many classrooms, teachers fit small group reading instruction into the reading workshop itself. Often as students read, teachers confer with a couple of readers and then meet with a small group. In some classrooms, however, teachers have a separate time blocked for additional work with small groups of readers. Sometimes reading specialists “push in” to the class at this time.

It's important that small group work not substitute for the reading workshop, but instead, offer additional opportunities for reading and instruction. There are many different formats for small group instruction; a few of those formats are described here:

Guided Reading: A guided reading group is generally comprised of students who are reading books at a similar level of difficulty. The teacher chooses a text that is at the students' instructional reading level. (That is, with support from a few minutes long introduction, students will be able to read the text with, at the very minimum, 95% accuracy, fluency and comprehension.) At the beginning of the guided reading lesson, the teacher introduces the text so that students can read it on their own without major difficulty, while still encountering challenges the teacher has strategically chosen. During the introduction, the teacher might angle the reading in a particular way by saying something like, “Readers, when you read this, make sure you pay special attention to the punctuation because it will help you read smoothly.” The teacher watches as each student reads the text on his or her own. The teacher notices as readers puzzle out the tricky parts, and observes which strategies students do and do not use if they encounter difficulties. The teacher lightly coaches individual readers. Once students are finished with the text (or with the designated pages), there is a quick book talk and then the teacher makes a teaching point based on what he or she observed as the students read. Sometimes the teacher will use a white board to aid in this teaching. After, the teacher will usually ask students to revisit the book, trying the strategy that has just been taught. A guided reading lesson lasts less than fifteen minutes.

Strategy Lesson: During a strategy lesson, the teacher pulls together a small group of students who need similar coaching or support. These students may or may not be reading similarly leveled books; either way, they'd benefit from similar instruction. For example, students from a range of reading levels who need support with fluency could be assembled for a strategy lesson. At the start of a strategy lesson, the teacher shares his or her teaching point and may or may not briefly demonstrate what he or she wants to teach. The students then try the strategy using their own (or teacher-supplied) texts. The teacher coaches students as they read and try the strategy. Sometimes the teacher may gather the cluster of students together at the end of this work to reinforce the teaching point. Strategy lessons tend to last ten minutes or less; during 90% of this time, students are working and the teacher is coaching.

Special Interventions: Some students may need extra support with a particular aspect of reading. These students struggle to “get it” even though a teacher has taught the particular strategy over and over during minilessons, reading conferences, and small group instruction. In these cases, a teacher will need to think “out of the box” in order to develop an instructional plan. For example, students who continue to read in a monotone with no evidence of phrasing even after ample whole class, small group, and individual instruction may profit from being asked to read into a tape recorder for a few days.

Book Clubs: Book clubs in upper grade classrooms involve four and occasionally six readers who talk across a whole line of books. This structure allows a teacher to teach reading skills while small groups of students read, talk and write about shared texts. Book club groups generally meet 2 times a week to discuss a text they are reading in sync with each other, usually for 10-20 minutes at a time. Since the conversation relies upon members having read to the same point

in their texts, students assign themselves several chapters a night. Book clubs provide us with another opportunity to push our readers to read more. Usually there is an expectation that club members will prepare for conversations by doing some writing about the issue that is at the forefront of their conversation. Members of any one club need to be fairly well-matched by reading level. The groups profit if the group members reflect diversity of gender and ethnicity.

Read Aloud

During the read aloud, a teacher reads aloud to students in order to model and demonstrate the orchestration of strategies that characterize proficient reading. The read aloud is also a time when students receive instruction that helps them talk well about books. Thus, in addition to modeling the work of proficient, fluent, and engaged readers during read aloud time, the teacher also teaches students how to have accountable conversations about books.

For about twenty minutes daily (and sometimes twenty minutes twice a day, including social studies and/or science class), students gather together to listen to the teacher read aloud. During this time, students discuss their thoughts and ideas about the text, either as a group or in partnerships. These partnerships may be informal (“turn to your neighbor”) or longer-lasting. When choosing read-aloud texts, teachers aim to include a range of levels, genres, tones, and authors. Often a read aloud book is integral to many minilessons within a unit of study. The teacher may decide that at least the opening of chapters 3, 5, 6, 9, 11...will be used during the teaching portion of minilessons.

There are a number of studies that show the benefits of reading aloud to students, especially to students who may have a more limited exposure to text outside of school. Besides offering a chance to model proficient reading behaviors, read aloud time also provides exposure to vocabulary, concepts, and text structures. This exposure to language and text is essential for students as they begin to explore the world of books and build their social skills. For these reasons, many teachers try to find other times in the day to read aloud to students. Often teachers differentiate these more “informal” read alouds by calling them story time.

Word Study

Word study is a daily component of balanced literacy for each grade and every level of reader and writer. This is the time of day for teaching phonics, spelling and vocabulary. Primary teachers generally devote 20-30 minutes a day to word study. Upper grade teachers are more apt to limit this to 15-20 minutes. At the beginning of the year, teachers do a spelling inventory to determine what to teach each student about phonics. Using this data, the teacher then designs small group activities, such as word sorts, that support students at various stages of spelling. During a word study session, the teacher often begins with a “minilesson” of sorts and then provides time for students to work independently, or in partnerships or groups, to make use of the lesson. During the independent work time of word study, students might use white boards, they might go back to their seats to work in small groups around word study instruction, or they might take out their reading and writing to apply the word study instruction to their work. Early readers may be studying phonemic awareness. Other readers may study vowel sounds and their letter representations. Still other readers may learn prefixes and suffixes. Each group of students then receives appropriate instruction. It is important for word study to transfer into students’ independent reading and writing. To do this, teachers coach students to draw on what they’ve learned during word study as they read or write on their own.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is an opportunity for the teacher to read a text with students (all eyes on a shared text). This is particularly effective for helping students who need extra support with a particular skill. The shared reading text is always a text that everyone in the class or the group can see, so it may be a big book with large print, a poem or a chart, or a text projected by means of an overhead. Shared Reading has enough elasticity that this method can help readers develop the earliest reading behaviors, and can also help mature readers. Teachers especially use Shared Reading to teach concepts of print, word solving strategies, ways to orchestrate the sources of information, and fluency.

The teacher often begins each ten-minute session by warming readers up with a text they already know well. Everyone reads it together, which offers opportunities to work on fluency and phrasing, among other things. Then the teacher turns the students' attention to the text they are working on, which may be a new text or one they've just been exposed to in the last day or two. Often, teachers will spend several days on a shared reading text. When students reread texts together they become more familiar with them. Often teachers will give students little copies of these texts to read during independent reading time. For more information about shared reading, you may want to reference the work of Don Holdaway and/or Brenda Parkes.

Close Reading

Another method of read aloud is to do a close reading session. Before you decide to develop a close reading session, you'll want to consider the purpose and ask, "When and why am I having the students read closely?" Students cannot be doing close reading all the time. They cannot mull over and rethink throughout an entire text if the text is lengthy, for example,—they will never get through it! You need to have a purpose to go read closely and to know what you want to get out of this close reading. For example, if a partnership or a club wanted to look at a significant scene in a book, that might be a good time for them to do some close reading of that scene. If you have students who tend to skim through books without paying attention to the details, you might want to do some close reading with them. For students who are starting a book, they might do some close reading of the beginning to help them to construct the world of the story. Close reading might be done as a class on a poem, primary document, book, article, etc. that is central to the unit. Students might be seeing this text for the first time during close reading or it might be follow up teaching and students are immersed in restudying this text.

As the TCRWP sees it, close reading is about seeing more than what you saw before. You can show students that there are certain lenses that you can carry to study texts that pay off. It is important to not make the close reading work so specific to one text that students do not see ways that they can carry this work and these lenses to other texts. You'll want to move in to the text that is being studied to help students see more in it and then pull out to make sure you show students how the way they are studying this one text can help them to study lots of other texts. So, if you point out what one author has done in one book, you'll want to then help students see the wider work that authors do which can apply to many books. You'll want to say things like, "*Did you notice what Katherine Paterson did there? So interesting right? Let's study her word choice more closely because when authors repeat words, that usually means those words are significant and important to pay attention to. Anytime you see repetition of words, it is worth studying those words closely and asking why the author may have included them.*" Here you'll notice that while the teacher does prompt students to look closely at one specific text, the teacher then connects this work with the larger work of studying author's craft.

There are those in the world who are saying that close reading is about helping students to read a particular text and understand it. To us, close reading is not about the texts alone. Close reading is about helping students understand the different lenses you can use to study a text and that you can carry these same lenses and use these same muscles to study and understand texts across genres: poetry, literature, informational texts, and so on. We are not teaching texts. We are teaching readers.

The Architecture of Effective Minilessons

*See also *A Guide to the Common Core Workshop* (Calkins, 2013) chapter 7.

We have found that many effective minilessons tend to follow a similar structure. That is, while the *content* of the minilesson changes from day to day, the *architecture* of minilessons often remains constant. Once teachers have internalized the architecture of minilessons, they will of course sometimes decide that a particular minilesson requires a different structure, and tailor the design of that day's minilesson to match the purpose and content.

Connection

- Our minilessons begin with a *connection*, in which we rally students for the lesson, talk about how this lesson will fit into the work children have been doing and how it will fit into their lives as writers. We might share a tiny excerpt of student work or tell a small story that becomes a metaphor for the lesson we'll teach. Next we tell children what we'll be teaching them. This is the teaching point.

Teaching

- Next, we teach children something we hope they'll use often as they write. There are several methods we might use to do this:
 - **Demonstration:** We usually do this by involving the children in thinking along with us as we demonstrate a strategy we use to write, and to make our writing clear, engaging and meaningful. Usually, this component is structured sequentially, like a how-to text. Teachers often tuck little tips into their demonstration of the strategy.
 - **Guided Practice:** When we teach with guided practice, we teach in a way that walks students through the process. We guide students through a process (say, developing a body paragraph of an essay together, step-by-step), with clear prompts to coach them along. Our hope is that once the minilesson is over, children will be able to do the same process without requiring our guidance or support.
 - **Explanation with Example:** We could, instead, give a little lecture with illustrations, to talk through the process we are teaching. In this instance, the challenge is making our teaching clear and memorable. We clearly state the strategy we are teaching and then give students a bit of content on the topic. We'll show an example to illustrate the work we hope students will try.
 - **Inquiry:** This method begins with a question (for instance, "What do strong introductions to information books look and sound like?") and then proceeds to a whole-class study to answer the question. Inquiry is most common when you want to engage children in studying an example of good work, or when you want them to contrast effective and ineffective examples, generating descriptors of each.

Active Engagement

- Then, we give all children a quick opportunity to try what we've taught with our support, or to imagine themselves trying it before we send them off to continue writing. This *active engagement* phase often involves children practicing the strategy we've just demonstrated, either on a shared piece of writing that the whole class is developing together, or on their own independent writing that they have brought with them to the lesson, and it often involves them talking with a partner. In "Guided Practice" and "Inquiry" lessons, the Active Engagement is a part of the teaching.

Link

- To bring closure to the minilesson, we usually *link* the minilesson to what the class has learned on previous days, to that day's work-time and to children's lives as writers. The teacher may recall the major topic the class has been studying. "You already learned... and today you have one more strategy to add..." Sometimes the subject of the minilesson will only be pertinent for some writers. "How many of you will do this today?" we might ask. Other times, we will want to be sure every writer incorporates the new strategy into his or her work that day. "I'd like everyone to try out this strategy today to see how it helps you as you write." In these ways, we make it likely that at least some children transfer the minilesson to that day's independent work, and that it becomes part of *all* children's ongoing repertoires.

Tips on Minilessons

- Notice that every minilesson begins with a section titled “Connection.” The Connection often includes a tiny bit of interaction as a way to engage the students. The connection often sets students up for learning something new by referencing prior knowledge that is relevant to the day’s instruction, the teacher may read the minilesson aims to address X? or by drum rolling the significance of the new instruction.
- Every Connection ends with a teaching point in which the teacher names precisely what he or she wants writers to learn. aims to teach. Usually the teacher embeds this teaching point in a sentence that literally says, “Today I will teach you that...” You will notice that the teaching point is reiterated often throughout a minilesson. The teaching point needs to be worth remembering, worth recording. It will not, therefore, simply name the terrain of the lesson (Today I will teach you how to revise). Instead, the teaching point provides a specific tip or strategy or bit of important knowledge: for example, a teaching point aims to be, “Today I want to teach you that it often helps to ask, ‘What’s my story *really* about?’ and then to rewrite to stretch out the parts of the story that show that important idea.”
- At the start of a unit, the first minilesson generally rallies students not only for that day’s minilesson but also for the month’s unit of study. It is always important at the start of a unit to promote the unit goals so that students grasp the big picture of the unit.
- After the connection, minilessons shift to the teaching part. In order to teach students a strategy, teachers usually teach by demonstrating. The teacher may role play. The role play is meant to function as a how-to or procedural guide, so the teacher usually acts out the sequence of steps that students will, hopefully, take. The role play or demonstration incorporates practical how-to tips.
- Part of the challenge in designing minilessons is that often we are teaching a strategy that is second nature to us. In order to make it accessible to kids for whom it is not second nature, we need to become conscious of the work that we do instantly and effortlessly, so that we can teach this to students. The trick is to be explicit and clear. However, sometimes in an effort to teach the separate steps of a strategy, we can inadvertently describe it in a way that doesn’t ring true; this is something to check for and avoid.
- The Active Engagement section of minilessons tends to begin with the teacher saying, “Let’s try it.” It is important to name what students will be trying in a way that is transferable to the reading or writing they are doing. This way, students practice something they can do over and over.
- During the Active Engagement section of a minilesson, the teacher often prompts students so as to lift the level of their work. For example, if you taught students to make a movie in their minds while writing, you might prompt by saying, “What happened first?... What do you see?... Who’s there?... Then what happened?...” When prompting, keep your suggestions simple. Your goal is for students to be able to prompt themselves just as you are now prompting them. For a strategy to be useful, the learner has to be able to use it independently, without a teacher, later. Therefore, make sure your prompts are the sorts that kids can internalize and use for themselves.
- It is crucial during a turn-and-talk Active Engagement to teach students not only to talk to a partner, but also to listen, and to talk back to each other’s ideas. By teaching students to talk back to each other’s ideas, you also teach them to talk back to (and extend) their own ideas. During these conversations, watch for times when students’ work during the Active Engagement is not what you had hoped or prompted for. You can intervene, coaching the class as a whole with more specific pointers, and let students have a second go at whatever you would like them to practice.
- When you weigh the success of a minilesson, focus on whether it was memorable and replicable. For example, a minilesson that contains a powerful anecdote or an apt metaphor, a teaching point that contains alliteration or rhyme, all make it memorable. Saying, “Information writers make containers for the information they want to teach their readers.” is more memorable than saying, “Information writers need to clearly structure their writing.”
- We hope that students’ learning is cumulative. Because it is important for students to hold on to what they learned from previous minilessons, it is common for a teacher to incorporate key terms from earlier minilessons into the new lesson.
- The charts and lists that we make are ways to organize, consolidate, and make available all that students are learning so that they can draw on these strategies in the midst of reading or writing time. If we want students to refer to charts, we need

to do so in our minilessons, conferences, and small-group instruction. You may eventually turn some of these charts into checklists or rubrics, giving these to students to use as guides while they work.

- Sometimes teachers assume that a minilesson makes only one teaching point, that there is one and only one thing that students can learn from a single minilesson. It is true that minilessons revolve around one main teaching point, but teachers also tuck in lots of smaller, subordinate points. If our teaching isn't densely packed with interesting, helpful information, it is likely students will zone out.

(Adapted from Calkins, L. (2013). *Units of Study in Opinion, Information and Narrative Writing*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann).

The Reading and Writing Project: A Reading Conference Cheat Sheet

Structure:	You Might Say:
Research (2-3 minutes) *Often this involves on-the-spot research. *Other times you will draw on prior knowledge or research. *Sometimes your research may be: which of a few options you have prepared makes the most sense for this student?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you working on as a reader today? Can you show me where you tried that? • Last time we met we were working on.... How's that going? Can you show me where you did that? • What is your plan for reading today? How will you do that? Walk me through your plans. • Can I look through your notebook for a sec'? Talk to me about what you were trying to do here... Here? • I can see a few options that might make sense for you next as a reader. Can we review them and see which you find appealing?
Compliment (1 minute) *Compliment a skill or strategy, a behavior, or volume and stamina *Skip the compliment if the student is ready for teaching immediately, or tuck it into your teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One strategy I see you applying is.... This strategy is helping you get better at.... • One thing about you as a reader that is so fantastic is that.... • You're not the kind of reader who.... Instead, you're the kind of writer who... • One thing that is becoming quite powerful in your reading is... • Your hard work at....is really paying off.
Teaching Point (part of teach) *At times the teaching point will come later in the conference, after the coaching, as part of the link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I give you one tip—something that will help you make a giant step forward? • Can I show you one way to extend your powers? It's a strategy that's a little tricky, but I think you're ready to... • When readers want to _____, like you, it often helps to _____.
Teach (1-2 minutes) *As you teach, you'll want to engage the child and make him or her feel a part of the work you are doing. Try using language like: "Let's try this..." or "We could..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, if I were to _____, I'd probably first ..., then I'd... • Do you see how I'm...? • Let's try a bit of this together and then you can try on your own. • If you study this reader, you can see here how...and here...Can you imagine how that might sound in your reading?
Coach/Active Engagement (1-3 minutes) *Get the child to "try it" and coach. This is optional, depending on whether the child needs support *Use short prompts that get the student to do the work you just taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now you try....(restate teaching point and stick around to make sure writer is applying the strategy) • SHORT PROMPTS: Don't forget to... That's good...now... • Don't forget to keep track of your goals, ".....?" • Now you try this in your writing I'll be back to check on you. When I come back I am going to ask to see/talk about.....
Link *30 seconds *Consider leaving an artifact! *Could be done later, in a follow up after the child does the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So whenever you are _____, you can remember to.... • Say back to me what you learned from this conference. • What's your plan as a writer when you get back to work on your own?

Teaching Methods to Draw Upon

Method	Explanation
Demonstration	The teacher or student demonstrates by showing students what it looks like to put a strategy into action. The steps required to put the strategy into action are broken down and pointed out to the students.
Explanation and Example	The teacher explicitly tells and shows an example. Often, the teacher will drive the point home by referencing something she did (perhaps in a minilesson or in the read aloud) or that another student did.
Guided Practice or Coaching	The teacher “runs alongside” students, coaching with quick, lean prompts to get the students to work with greater proficiency.
Proficient Partner	The teacher acts as a partner or group member lifting the level of the work the student or students are doing. At the end teacher states the strategy that was demonstrated.
Inquiry	The teacher invites students to study something with her and then helps the students extrapolate from the examples principals that can be transferred into their own work.
Problem-Solving	The teacher lays out the problem she sees the students having and then coaches and provides feedback as the student to work together to solve it.
Voice-Over	When students are involved in a conversation the teacher observes and voices over them what they are doing well or what they need to do. This method relies on children drawing upon what they have already been taught and putting it into action.
Book Introduction	The teacher introduces the text in a way that gives children access to the story, genre, information topic while leaving some problem-solving work for them to do. This information allows the teacher to scaffold and adjust the level of support needed before the first read of the text. Introductions can also be co-created by the teacher and students. They can also be given when parts of the texts have fallen apart.
Close Reading	The teacher leads a rereading of a text with lenses that help students see more than what they saw before. It is important to not make the close reading work so specific to one text that students do not see ways that they can carry this work and these lenses across other texts.
Read Aloud	The teacher reads aloud a portion(s) of a text and prompts the students to do specific work with it repeatedly.
Shared Reading	The teacher takes a portion of a text, perhaps a significant or a particularly complex part, and has the students read it with the teacher repeatedly. The teacher coaches the students with quick, lean prompts to get the students to work with greater proficiency.
Shared Writing	The teacher and students compose a text together. The teacher lifts the level of the writing by coaching the students. The teacher writes the text in front of the student
Interactive Writing	The teacher and students compose a text together. The teacher lifts the level of the writing by coaching the students. The students and teacher writes the text.

Differences Between Strategy Lessons and Guided Reading

OUR GUIDED READING GROUPS

We gather a group of students who are able to read about the same level of text.

OUR STRATEGY LESSONS

We gather a group of students who would benefit from help with a similar strategy and can do some similar work (easily or with our support) with the shared text we've chosen or with their independent books. The text might be somewhat challenging for some readers and easy for others, but we gather this group because the students in it can all read the text and they all need help with that strategy.

The group of readers usually works with a challenging text. The group reads one challenging text today, another one tomorrow.

We choose a given text because it allows readers to develop and practice a strategy. If the strategy is reading with expression, for example, the text might well be an easy one. That is, the difficulties might center not on word-solving through a difficult text, but instead on doing challenging work with an easy text. Strategy lessons are designed to build on one another in that students are asked to work with increasing independence and sophistication rather than to work with texts of increasing difficulty.

The guided-reading session begins with the teacher giving a book introduction, overviewing the text, and then helping students with unfamiliar vocabulary words.

A teacher may or may not opt to do a book introduction and to use new vocabulary words in ways which help readers with them, depending both on whether the text is challenging enough to require this and on the point of the lesson. Students may, for example, be rereading a familiar text, in which case a book introduction would be unnecessary, or they may be studying ways to orient themselves to an unfamiliar text. A strategy lesson can begin, then, either with a book intro or with a teaching point and then invite readers to practice or by providing a brief demonstration followed by student practice.

The teacher observes students reading in the midst of the guided-reading session. She then coaches students through difficulty and develops a teaching point out of what she sees. After the students read there is a brief book talk.

The teacher enters a strategy lesson having already decided on a teaching point (although we call it a "strategy"). The initial assessment happens before the group. Teachers observe readers in independent reading, book clubs, guided-reading sessions, and in more formal assessments, and organize series of strategy lessons with a goal in mind.

The teacher doesn't mention the teaching point until the final minutes of the guided reading session. The teaching point is taught through discussion, brief work on a white board, and/or references to the problematic part of the text. After the teaching point has been made, there may be time to practice one more time. There may not be opportunities to watch how readers use the teaching point as they read. Otherwise, the teacher will link what students learned to their ongoing reading work.

As the students are reading, the teacher coaches them to use the strategy. At the end of their reading she then links the strategy to their continued work in the class. The next day's strategy lesson builds upon today's strategy lesson, just as a string of minilessons build upon one other.

Adapted from Calkins, L. (2001). Chapter 10: Guided Reading and Strategy Lessons from *The Art of Teaching Reading*. Addison- Wesley Longman.

Big Ideas About Book Clubs

I. Renew the Sense of Ownership to Tap into Children's Energy and Investment

- a. Choice of Books is Crucial – clubs should pick (not be assigned) the books they'll read
 - Choice may be limited but still clubs choose
 - Each member of the club could take turns picking the book the club will read
 - Club members could let one book lead them to the next, considering what they liked or studied in the last book
 - All club books for a unit could be displayed by levels on tables and children could browse and make a wish list

- b. Clubs should be given the opportunity to:
 - Name themselves
 - Decide what to put in their club folder
 - Invent tools to help organize their club and ideas
 - Pick the place where they will meet
 - Assign themselves work to do
 - Come up with ideas to discuss as long as they can, and with studies they want to pursue

II. Keep Reading Volume Up During Clubs

- Schedule clubs to meet to talk two times a week, perhaps three for readers who read a lot at home. Other days readers read and don't meet.
- Clubs meet to talk for only $\frac{1}{2}$ the workshop time and then go off and read for the other $\frac{1}{2}$ or vice versa depending on minilesson.
- Study logs to see how much each reader in a club usually reads and assign pages for clubs to read based on what you observe in logs.
- It may be time for readers to set new goals for how much they can read and to push themselves to read more.
- Children who are able can have a second book to read if the club is reading at a slower pace.

III. Diversify Club Work to Meet the Needs of the Readers So We Teach Reading Not Talking

Examples:

- a. Fluency –
 - When the group references parts of a book, each member could read the part, focusing on smooth reading and on making their voice match the meaning.
 - Children could read parts with dialogue by taking on the characters in those sections of the book.

- b. Monitoring for sense –
 - Children could begin each club meeting by retelling the big moments on the character's timeline.
 - Children could put Post-its on confusing parts, reread these and discuss what happened.
 - Children could do prediction work that holds them close to the text.
 - Children could read aloud the text to each other and act out parts.

- c. Synthesis –
 - Children could find multiple parts from across the book that fit with the idea the group is discussing.
 - Children could read forward and attach parts to multiple ideas the group has discussed before.

- Children could keep ideas the club discussed on Post-its, lay these side by side, and find how they fit together. In this way, children will synthesize the text by synthesizing past conversations.

IV. Use Different Methods to Teach into Clubs

For example:

- Give a book introduction to get children who are confused back on track – this could introduce a time period if children are reading historical fiction.
- Do Guided reading to move club up a level.
- Do Guided reading into the level the club is reading but address the work members need to be able to do in the next level.
- Do Guided reading on the challenges of the genre the club is reading.
- Give a series of Strategy lessons on a particular reading skill.
- Do shared reading on a part to work on fluency, inference or word work.
- Be a proficient club member and enter the conversation to lift the level of it.
- Pull club on non talk days and have members read, while coaching all the readers working on a specific skill.
- Have one club study another club, whether it's their jottings, charts they have developed or conversation, and have them observe and make plans off of what they noticed.

V. If There Is a Shortage of Book Club Books

- Teachers on a grade could partner up or pool all their books into leveled bins that can be shared, or create a library in the hallway.
- Clubs could take more time reading their club books, reading fewer of those while maintaining volume in their independent books.
- Clubs could read short texts such as typed up picture books or copies of short stories while maintaining volume in their independent books.

VI. For Teachers Who Are New to Club Work

- Start off with read aloud clubs. First, read aloud. Then, instead of having a whole class conversation, have clubs meet to discuss the pages you've read.
- Clubs can read different short texts their members have selected that match them as readers.
- Start calling partner work “clubs” and move partners to the same book.
- Stagger the launching of clubs so you can get one club off to a good start, then launch the second, third and so on over the course of two weeks or so.

Student Reading Log

Name: _____

Date	Title of Book	Level	Home or School	Page Started	Page Ended	Minutes Read	Genre

Building a Reading Life Student Assessments



Reading Logs

1point

1point

1point

1point

1point

Log is filled out each day with title of book read, level, date and time.

Log shows that I finish each book I read before starting a new one.

Log shows that I push myself to sometimes read more than I am expected to (an hour or more on some days!)

Log shows that I am pushing myself to read more pages than I did before while I read.

Log shows that I have patterns in my reading and choose my next read deliberately, according to a plan.

Total points _____



Engagement and Independence

1point

1point

1point

1point

1point

I read books at my level.

I pull my book close to me and keep my eyes on print the whole time the class is reading.

I can explain what strategies I am using to help me understand my book deeply.

I can set goals to get stronger as a reader.

I can explain my plan for how to reach my goals and I can give evidence that I am working on my plan.

Total points _____

Post Its

1 point

1 point

1 point

1 point

1point

I have post it notes in my book that show my ideas about my reading.

I have some post it notes that show that I am tracking an idea through a book.

My post its show my latest, greatest thinking. I have pushed myself to write only my best thinking.

I go back to reread my post its to help me think of new ideas and write about those.

I sort through my post its to track my growth as a reader and assess how I am working to meet my goals.

Total points _____



Teaching Moves for Comprehension Skills

The Skill:	If the students' talk sounds like...	Some strategies to demonstrate are...	Questions to teach students to keep in mind while reading:	Coaching moves and conversational prompts to use when listening in on book clubs or partnerships...
Inferring about character (learning about characters through their words, thoughts and actions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think _____ is the kind of person who...” • “_____ is motivated by...” • “When _____ said that, I realized that he...” • “Maybe she’s ...” • “My character is the kind of person that...” • “He feels...” • “I can tell that she...” • “She acts like...” • “He thinks...” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good readers get to know a character by comparing what the character says and thinks with what he does. Then readers ask ourselves, “Do these (actions, words and thoughts) match? If not, what does that tell me about this character?” • Good readers figure out a character’s motivations by paying attention to what she does and then asking, “What does this character have to gain as a result of her actions?” • Good readers figure out (infer) the meaning of a new word from the words around it (using context). • Good readers use what we know about the character/story elements to help us understand a new or confusing phrase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does that tell me about her? • Would I be friends with him? Would I spend a day with him? • What am I realizing about _____? • What word would make sense here? • Why is _____ doing this? • What does a character have to gain by her actions? • What is she thinking? • How do I know that about my character? • Why did the character say, do, want, think, feel that? • What from the book makes me think that about my character? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about how you are getting to know your character. • The text doesn’t tell you – say how you knew that. Talk about what part made you think that. • Talk about what message you think the author wanted us to understand. • Talk about the big ideas in what you are reading. • “I notice... and it makes me think... (about the character)” • “I think the character is feeling/thinking...” • “The character is saying...but I think what he really means is...” • “I know this part says...but I think there is more going on here, like...” • “I think this word/phrase really means... because...”
Empathizing/ Making Connections (making connections to experiences in own life)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This reminds me of when I...” • “This is just like...” • “This connects to my own life because...” • “One time I...” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good readers make connections by thinking if we have experienced, read or seen anything similar to what is in the story. • Then readers ask ourselves, “How does this help me understand the story better?” • Good readers get connected to a story by reacting strongly to the text and asking ourselves, “How could...?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this experience help me understand the book better? • How does what I just read support or further my theory? • How does that remind me of how people are/the world is? • Does this remind me of anything? • Have I ever...? • How did I feel? • Am I connecting this book with other books I’ve read? • Can I think of a time that I...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine yourself in this situation. • Speak from the character’s point of view. • What do you know now that you didn’t know before? • “This part makes me think of...” • “This part feels unrealistic because I know in real life that...” • “If I was _____ I would ...” • “I’ve felt like that.” • “I can relate to...”

Examples of Prompts to Use During Read Aloud to Highlight Particular Reading Skills

Reading Skill	Ways We Preface Think Alouds During Read Aloud	Ways We Prompt Students to Talk, Think or Write During Read Aloud	Examples from <i>The Great Gilly Hopkins</i> by Katherine Patterson
Envisioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As I read this part, I'm picturing... - When I picture this in my mind, it makes me think... - When I read this part, I can hear/smell/taste/feel... - I'm picturing the character right now, and I'm imaging how she looks (moves/sounds, etc.) I bet... - This book is set (in the old days), so I'm picturing that... - Wait, I have to stop and picture this part...The author just gave lots of details. (I see her/him...I imagine...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I'm going to reread this part. Readers do that so we can get a vivid picture in our minds. In a minute, you can share your mental picture with your partner... - Imagine with your partner what the character looks like when she says that... - Let's really picture this part. Look closely at this illustration, and try to put ourselves inside the scene by thinking about the sounds/smells/tastes, etc. - The author just gave us a big description ofTurn and talk to your partner about what you're envisioning right now. 	<p>Agnes Stokes was waiting outside when she started for school the next morning.</p> <p><i>"You know some things about Agnes. See her."</i></p> <p>Gilly's first impulse was to turn around <i>"What does Gilly's face look like? Add it to your picture."</i></p> <p>Gilly's first impulse was to turn around and go back into the house until Agnes had left, but it was too late.</p> <p><i>"Agnes has just seen Gilly. What does she look like now? Show me. Make your face look like Agnes's face. Make your body look like hers."</i></p> <p>Agnes was already waving and yelling at her. <i>"Hear Gilly's thoughts. What is she thinking? Turn and tell your partner."</i></p> <p>Agnes was already waving and yelling at her. What a creep! Gilly walked past her quickly without speaking. She could hear Agnes's little scurrying steps behind her; then there was a dirty hand on her arm.</p> <p><i>"Partner A, be Gilly and partner B, be Agnes and act out the movie in your mind."</i></p>

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Benchmark Reading Levels and Marking Period Assessments

SEPTEMBER	NOVEMBER	JANUARY	MARCH	JUNE
<u>Kindergarten</u> Emergent Story Books Shared Reading	<u>Kindergarten</u> Emergent Story Books Shared Reading A/B (with book intro)	<u>Kindergarten</u> B/C (with book intro)	<u>Kindergarten</u> 1=Early Emergent 2=A/B (with book intro) 3=C (with book intro) 4=D/E	<u>Kindergarten</u> 1=B or below 2=C (with book intro) 3=D/E 4=F or above
<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=B or below 2=C 3=D/E 4=F or above	<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=C or below 2=D/E 3=F/G 4=H or above	<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=D or below 2=E/F 3=G/H 4=I or above	<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=E or below 2=F 3=G/H 4=I or above	<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=G or below 2=H 3=I/J/K 4=L or above
<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=F or below 2=G/H 3=I/J/K 4=L or above	<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=G or below 2=H/I 3=J/K/L 4=M or above	<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=H or below 2=I/J 3=K/L 4=M or above	<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=I or below 2=J/K 3=L/M 4=N or above	<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=J or below 2=K/L 3=M 4=N or above
<u>Grade 3:</u> 1=K or below (avg. H) 2=L 3=M 4=N or above	<u>Grade 3:</u> 1=K or below (avg. I) 2=L/M (avg. L) 3=N 4=O or above	<u>Grade 3:</u> 1=L or below 2=M/N 3=O 4=P or above	<u>Grade 3:</u> 1=M or below (avg. J) 2=N 3=O 4=P or above	<u>Grade 3:</u> 1=N or below (avg. K) 2=O 3=P 4=Q or above
<u>Grade 4:</u> 1=M or below (avg. J) 2=N/O (avg. N) 3=P/Q (avg. P) 4=R or above	<u>Grade 4:</u> 1=N or below (avg. L) 2=O/P (avg. P) 3=Q/R (avg. Q) 4=S or above	<u>Grade 4:</u> 1=O or below 2=P/Q 3=R/S 4=T or above	<u>Grade 4:</u> 1=O or below (avg. K) 2=P/Q (avg. P) 3=R/S (avg. R) 4=T or above	<u>Grade 4:</u> 1=P or below (avg. L) 2=Q/R (avg. Q) 3=S/T (avg. S) 4=U or above
<u>Grade 5:</u> 1=P or below (avg. M) 2=Q/R (avg. Q) 3=S 4=T or above	<u>Grade 5:</u> 1=P or below (avg. N) 2=Q/R/S (avg. Q) 3=T 4=U or above	<u>Grade 5:</u> 1=Q or below 2=R/S/T 3=U 4=V or above	<u>Grade 5:</u> 1=Q or below (avg. O) 2=R/S/T (avg. R/S) 3=U 4=V or above	<u>Grade 5:</u> 1=R or below (avg. P) 2=S/T/U (avg. S/T) 3=V 4=W or above
<u>Grade 6:</u> 1=R or below (avg. O) 2=S/T/U (avg. S) 3=V/W (avg. V) 4=X or above	<u>Grade 6:</u> 1=S or below (avg. P) 2=T/U/V (avg. T) 3=W 4=X or above	<u>Grade 6:</u> 1=T or below 2=U/V 3=W/X 4=Y or above	<u>Grade 6:</u> 1=T or below (avg. Q) 2=U/V (avg. U) 3=W/X (avg. W) 4=Y or above	<u>Grade 6:</u> 1=U or below (avg. Q) 2=V/W (avg. V) 3=X 4=Y or above
<u>Grade 7:</u> 1=T or below (avg. P) 2=U/V (avg. U) 3=W/X (avg. W) 4=Y or above	<u>Grade 7:</u> 1=T or below (avg. Q) 2=U/V/W (avg. U) 3=X 4=Y or above	<u>Grade 7:</u> 1=U or below 2=V/W 3=X 4=Y or above	<u>Grade 7:</u> 1=U or below (avg. R) 2=V/W (avg. V) 3=X 4=Y or above	<u>Grade 7:</u> 1=V or below (avg. R) 2=W/X (avg. W) 3=Y 4=Z or above
<u>Grade 8:</u> 1=V or below 2=W 3=X/Y/Z 4=Adult Literature	<u>Grade 8:</u> 1=V or below 2=W 3=X/Y/Z 4=Adult Literature	<u>Grade 8:</u> 1=W or below 2=X/Y 3=Z/Adult Literature 4=Adult Literature	<u>Grade 8:</u> 1=W or below 2=X/Y/Z 3=Adult Literature 4=Adult Literature	<u>Grade 8:</u> 1=W or below 2=X/Y/Z 3=Adult Literature 4=Adult Literature

* We expect that many schools will incorporate the reading level as part of the child's grade for reading workshop, but that that assessment will also be informed by reading habits, growth, etc. The level 1-3 benchmarks represent the average text difficulty levels for the majority of readers who achieved that score on the ELA. There is no pattern that allows for prediction of a 4. Because a score of 4 generally only allows for one or two errors, it is hard to assure parents or students that a correlation will exist between level of text difficulty and a score of 4. 8th Grade benchmarks come from Qualitative assessments.



Every Child, Every Day

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The six elements of effective reading instruction don't require much time or money—just educators' decision to put them in place.

"Every child a reader" has been the goal of instruction, education research, and reform for at least three decades. We now know more than ever about how to accomplish this goal. Yet few students in the United States regularly receive the best reading instruction we know how to give.

Instead, despite good intentions, educators often make decisions about instruction that compromise or supplant the kind of experiences all children need to become engaged, successful readers. This is especially true for struggling readers, who are much less likely than their peers to participate in the kinds of high-quality instructional activities that would ensure that they learn to read.

Six Elements for Every Child

Here, we outline six elements of instruction that every child should experience every day. Each of these elements can be implemented in any district and any school, with any curriculum or set of materials, and without additional funds. All that's necessary is for adults to make the decision to do it.

1. Every child reads something he or she chooses.

The research base on student-selected reading is robust and conclusive: Students read more, understand more, and are more likely to continue reading when they have the opportunity to choose what they read. In a 2004 meta-analysis, Guthrie and Humenick found that the two most powerful instructional design factors for improving reading motivation and comprehension were (1) student access to many books and (2) personal choice of what to read.

We're not saying that students should never read teacher- or district-selected texts. But at some time every day, they should be able to choose what they read.

The experience of choosing in itself boosts motivation. In addition, offering choice makes it more likely that every reader will be matched to a text that he or she can read well. If students initially have trouble choosing texts that match their ability level and interest, teachers can provide limited choices to guide them toward successful reading experiences. By giving students these opportunities, we help them develop the ability to choose appropriate texts for themselves—a skill that dramatically increases the likelihood they will read outside school (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, Reis et al., 2007).

Some teachers say they find it difficult to provide a wide selection of texts because of budget constraints. Strangely, there is always money available for workbooks, photocopying, and computers; yet many schools claim that they have no budget for large, multileveled classroom libraries. This is interesting because research has demonstrated that access to self-selected texts improves students' reading performance (Krashen, 2011), whereas no evidence indicates that workbooks, photocopies, or computer tutorial programs have ever done so (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Dynarski, 2007).

There is, in fact, no way they ever could. When we consider that the typical 4th grade classroom has students reading anywhere from the 2nd to the 9th grade reading levels (and that later grades have an even wider range), the idea that one workbook or textbook could meet the needs of every reader is absurd (Hargis, 2006). So, too, is the idea that skills developed through isolated, worksheet-based skills practice and fill-in-the-blank vocabulary quizzes will transfer to real reading in the absence of any evidence that they ever have. If school principals eliminated the budget for workbooks and worksheets and instead spent the money on real books for classroom libraries, this decision could dramatically improve students' opportunities to become better readers.

2. Every child reads accurately.

Good readers read with accuracy almost all the time. The last 60 years of research on optimal text difficulty—a body of research that began with Betts (1949)—consistently demonstrates the importance of having students read texts they can read accurately and understand. In fact, research shows that reading at 98 percent or higher accuracy is essential for reading acceleration. Anything less slows the rate of improvement, and anything below 90 percent accuracy doesn't improve reading ability at all (Allington, 2012; Ehri, Dreyer, Flugman, & Gross, 2007).

Although the idea that students read better when they read more has been supported by studies for the last 70 years, policies that simply increase the amount of time allocated for students to read often find mixed results (National Reading Panel, 2000). The reason is simple: It's not just the time spent with a book in hand, but rather the intensity and volume of *high-success* reading, that determines a student's progress in learning to read (Allington, 2009; Kuhn et al., 2006).

When students read accurately, they solidify their word-recognition, decoding, and word-analysis skills. Perhaps more important, they are likely to understand what they read—and, as a result, to enjoy reading. In contrast, struggling students who spend the same amount of time reading texts that they can't read accurately are at a disadvantage in several important ways. First, they read less text; it's slow going when you encounter many words you don't recognize instantly. Second, struggling readers are less likely to understand (and therefore enjoy) what they read. They are likely to become frustrated when reading these difficult texts and therefore to lose confidence in their word-attack, decoding, or word-recognition skills. Thus, a struggling reader and a successful reader who engage in the same 15-minute independent reading session do not necessarily receive equivalent practice, and they are likely to experience different outcomes.

Sadly, struggling readers typically encounter a steady diet of too-challenging texts throughout the school day as they make their way through classes that present grade-level material hour after hour. In essence, traditional instructional practices widen the gap between readers.

3. Every child reads something he or she understands.

Understanding what you've read is the goal of reading. But too often, struggling readers get interventions that focus on basic skills in isolation, rather than on reading connected text for meaning. This common misuse of intervention time often arises from a grave misinterpretation of what we know about reading difficulties.

The findings of neurological research are sometimes used to reinforce the notion that some students who struggle to learn to read are simply "wired differently" (Zambo, 2003) and thus require large amounts of isolated basic skills practice. In fact, this same research shows that remediation that emphasizes comprehension can change the structure of struggling students' brains. Keller and Just (2009) used imaging to examine the brains of struggling readers before and after they received 100 hours of remediation—including lots of reading and rereading of real texts. The white matter of the struggling readers was of lower structural quality than that of good readers before the intervention, but it improved following the intervention. And these changes in the structure of the brain's white matter consistently predicted increases in reading ability.

Numerous other studies (Aylward et al., 2003; Krafnick, Flowers, Napoliello, & Eden, 2011; Shaywitz et al., 2004) have supported Keller and Just's findings that comprehensive reading instruction is associated with changed activation patterns that mirror those of typical readers. These studies show that it doesn't take neurosurgery or banging away at basic skills to enable the brain to develop the ability to read: It takes lots of reading and rereading of text that students find engaging and comprehensible.

The findings from brain research align well with what we've learned from studies of reading interventions. Regardless of their focus, target population, or publisher, interventions that accelerate reading development routinely devote at least two-thirds of their time to reading and rereading rather than isolated or contrived skill practice (Allington, 2011). These findings have been consistent for the last 50 years—yet the typical reading intervention used in schools today has struggling readers spending the bulk of their time on tasks other than reading and rereading actual texts.

Studies of exemplary elementary teachers further support the finding that more authentic reading develops better readers (Allington, 2002; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003). In these large-scale national studies, researchers found that students in more-effective teachers' classrooms spent a larger percentage of reading instructional time actually reading; students in less-effective teachers' classrooms spent more time using worksheets, answering low-level, literal questions, or completing before-and-after reading activities. In addition, exemplary teachers were more likely to differentiate instruction so that all readers had books they could actually read accurately, fluently, and with understanding.

4. Every child writes about something personally meaningful.

In our observations in schools across several states, we rarely see students writing anything more than fill-in-the-blank or short-answer responses during their reading block. Those who do have the opportunity to compose something longer than a few sentences are either responding to a teacher-selected prompt or writing within a strict structural formula that turns even paragraphs and essays into fill-in-the-blank exercises.

As adults, we rarely if ever write to a prompt, and we almost never write about something we don't know about. Writing is called *composition* for a good reason: We actually *compose* (construct something unique) when we write. The opportunity to compose continuous text about something meaningful is not just something nice to have when there's free time after a test or at the end of the school year. Writing provides a different modality within which to practice the skills and strategies of reading for an authentic purpose.

When students write about something they care about, they use conventions of spelling and grammar because it matters to them that their ideas are communicated, not because they will lose points or see red ink if they don't (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2010). They have to think about what words will best convey their ideas to their readers. They have to encode these words using letter patterns others will recognize. They have to make sure they use punctuation in a way that will help their readers understand which words go together, where a thought starts and ends, and what emotion goes with it. They have to think about what they know about the structure of similar texts to set up their page and organize their ideas. This process is especially important for struggling readers because it produces a comprehensible text that the student can read, reread, and analyze.

5. Every child talks with peers about reading and writing.

Research has demonstrated that conversation with peers improves comprehension and engagement with texts in a variety of settings (Cazden, 1988). Such literary conversation does not focus on recalling or retelling what students read. Rather, it asks students to analyze, comment, and compare—in short, to think about what they've read. Fall, Webb, and Chudowsky (2000) found better outcomes when kids simply talked with a peer about what they read than when they spent the same amount of class time highlighting important information after reading.

Similarly, Nystrand (2006) reviewed the research on engaging students in literate conversations and noted that even small amounts of such conversation (10 minutes a day) improved standardized test scores, regardless of students' family background or reading level. Yet struggling readers were the least likely to discuss daily what they read with peers. This was often because they were doing extra basic-skills practice instead. In class discussions, struggling readers were more likely to be asked literal questions about what they had read, to prove they "got it," rather than to be engaged in a conversation about the text.

Time for students to talk about their reading and writing is perhaps one of the most underused, yet easy-to-implement, elements of instruction. It doesn't require any special materials, special training, or even large amounts of time. Yet it provides measurable benefits in comprehension, motivation, and even language competence. The task of switching between writing, speaking, reading, and listening helps students make connections between, and thus solidify, the skills they use in each. This makes peer conversation especially important for English language learners, another population that we rarely ask to talk about what they read.

6. Every child listens to a fluent adult read aloud.

Listening to an adult model fluent reading increases students' own fluency and comprehension skills (Trelease, 2001), as well as expanding their vocabulary, background knowledge, sense of story, awareness of genre and text structure, and comprehension of the texts read (Wu & Samuels, 2004). Yet few teachers above 1st grade read aloud to their students every day (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). This high-impact, low-input strategy is another underused component of the kind of instruction that supports readers. We categorize it as low-input because, once again, it does not require special materials or training; it simply requires a decision to use class time more effectively. Rather than conducting whole-class reading of a single text that fits few readers, teachers should choose to spend a few minutes a day reading to their students.

Things That Really Matter

Most of the classroom instruction we have observed lacks these six research-based elements. Yet it's not difficult to find the time and resources to implement them. Here are a few suggestions.

First, eliminate almost all worksheets and workbooks. Use the money saved to purchase books for classroom libraries; use the time saved for self-selected reading, self-selected writing, literary conversations, and read-alouds.

Second, ban test-preparation activities and materials from the school day. Although sales of test preparation materials provide almost two-thirds of the profit that testing companies earn (Glovin & Evans, 2006), there are no studies demonstrating that engaging students in test prep ever improved their reading proficiency—or even their test performance (Guthrie, 2002). As with eliminating workbook completion, eliminating test preparation provides time and money to spend on the things that really matter in developing readers.

It's time for the elements of effective instruction described here to be offered more consistently to every child, in every school, every day. Remember, adults have the power to make these decisions; kids don't. Let's decide to give them the kind of instruction they need.