What Principals Need to Know about Teaching and Learning Reading

Pat & Jim Cunningham
Chula Vista, A Success Story

A K-6 district in California with 27,000 students, 2/3 are Latino/Hispanic.

In 2002, 2 of 44 schools performed adequately on California’s mandated achievement tests.

Consistent with Reading First, Chula Vista adopted a commercial reading program, provided 120 hours of professional development, and monitored fidelity of implementation.

In 2004, 9 of the 44 schools met the API targets.

Dissatisfied with their results, in 2005, Chula Vista began implementing an instructional framework based on a gradual release of responsibility model.

Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework

1. Establish lesson purpose.
3. Whole class participation. “I do, you help.”
   (opportunity for formative assessment)
5. Independent work. “You do it alone. I watch.”
   (opportunity for summative assessment)
Implementing the Instructional Framework

Building-level instructional resources teams consisting of the principal, coach and a few teachers were formed at each school. These teams were provided with 4 days of professional development and they in turn carried out professional development and monitored the implementation at their schools.

Walk throughs indicated that less that 25% of classrooms included the productive small-group discussions. Teachers were provided with professional development on how to incorporate productive small-group work in their lessons.

Tests given in 2011 indicated that 41 of the 44 schools now scored satisfactorily on the California API tests.
What can we learn from Chula Vista?

Schools can significantly improve the literacy abilities of students, even when most of the students do not come from white, middle class families.

Commercial programs “implemented with fidelity” may not achieve the desired results.

Instruction must include teacher modeling as well as opportunities for students to interact with one another to accomplish the purpose set for each lesson.

Observing what is happening in classrooms tells us what teachers need help in implementing.

Change requires knowledge, prioritizing, commitment, perseverance and TIME!
Common Core State Standards in Reading: What’s Different?

• Highest meaning vocabulary standards ever (emphasis on academic and domain-specific vocabulary)
• Highest comprehension standards ever (emphasis on both close reading and higher-order thinking)
• More informational text than ever before (including reading across the curriculum)
• Students must be able to support everything they say or write about reading or vocabulary with specific evidence from the text
PARCC Grade 3 Item

Part A

What is one main idea of “How Animals Live?”

a. There are many types of animals on the planet.
b. Animals need water to live.
c. There are many ways to sort different animals.*
d. Animals begin their life cycles in different forms.

Part B

Which sentence from the article best supports the answer to Part A?

a. “Animals get oxygen from air or water.”
b. "Animals can be grouped by their traits.”*
c. "Worms are invertebrates.”
d. "All animals grow and change over time.”
e. "Almost all animals need water, food, oxygen, and shelter to live."
Smarter Balanced Grade 4 Item

Read the sentences from the passage. Then answer the question.

“My grandma pulled the ball out, unwrapped it, and held it out for us to see. The ball was **scarred** almost beyond recognition. It had dog bite marks, dirt scuffs, and fraying seams. Right in the middle was a big signature in black ink that I had somehow overlooked. It was smudged now and faded, but it still clearly said ‘Babe Ruth.’ I began to shake inside.”

Click on two phrases from the paragraph that help you understand the meaning of **scarred**.
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What Principals Need to Know About Teaching and Learning Reading

WHAT PRINCIPALS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Teaching and Learning Reading

SECOND EDITION

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A Joint Publication of NAESP and Solution Tree
Chapter 1: Building An Effective Reading Program

We know ENOUGH right now to build effective reading programs. We know that:

1. Reading is complex and multidimensional.
2. Reading First didn’t work.
3. Schools can increase reading achievement.
4. Effective literacy instruction requires a supportive, nurturing classroom environment.
5. Assessment can promote or hinder good instruction.
6. The school schedule affects literacy instruction.
Chapter 2-9

2. Comprehension
3. Vocabulary
4. Literacy in the Content Areas
5. Phonics
6. Fluency
7. Teacher Read-Aloud and Independent Reading
8. Reading Motivation and Engagement
9. Struggling Readers and English Learners
Chapter 2-9

Every chapter includes:

• Common Roadblocks
• Best Practices
• Resources for Study Groups or PLCs (reproducible)
• “What to Look For” Checklists (reproducible)

[Link](go.solution-tree.com/leadership/Reproducibles_WPNTK_reading.html)
Ch. 7 Teacher Read-Aloud and Independent Reading

Roadblocks:
• Teachers think they don’t have time.
• The benefits are not easily measured.
• The belief that there is no supporting research.

Best Practices:
• Teachers provide read-aloud and independent reading daily.
• Teachers use both fiction and nonfiction as read-alouds.
• Teachers develop meaning vocabulary during read-alouds.
• Students have choice of and access to a wide range of materials.
Teacher Read-Aloud and Independent Reading: What to Look For (Reproducible on ST website)

1. Do teachers reserve time each day to read aloud and for independent reading?
   □  Frequently □  Occasionally □  Rarely □  Never

2. Do teachers include both fiction and nonfiction in their read-alouds?
   □  Frequently □  Occasionally □  Rarely □  Never

3. Do teachers seize opportunities to build word meanings during their read-alouds?
   □  Frequently □  Occasionally □  Rarely □  Never

4. For independent reading, do students get to choose from a variety of reading materials?
   □  Frequently □  Occasionally □  Rarely □  Never
Teacher Read-Aloud and Independent Reading Resources (Reproducible)
The following books contain practical suggestions for getting all students to read and clever ways to expand classroom libraries:


This book, written by a sixth-grade teacher, will inspire upper-grade teachers who might have given up on trying to get their older students to read:


The following are some practical articles on teacher read-aloud and independent reading from *The Reading Teacher:*


Chapter Two: Comprehension*

• Roadblocks to Comprehension Instruction
• Best Practices for Comprehension Instruction
• Resources for Comprehension Study Groups
• Comprehension Instruction in Your School: What to Look For

*What it’s all about!
Roadblocks to Comprehension Instruction

• The belief that assessing comprehension teaches comprehension
• The belief that comprehension “just happens”
• The belief that comprehension can wait its turn
Best Practices for Comprehension Instruction

• Research says reading comprehension can be taught.
• Informational text presents different comprehension challenges than literary text.
• Research supports a variety of particular comprehension lesson frameworks.
Resources for Comprehension Study Groups
Comprehension Resources (Reproducible)

This document summarizes the research on reading comprehension and recommends practical teaching strategies for implementing the seven research-based best practices outlined in chapter 2:


This is a valuable resource for think-alouds that is full of examples and tips for successful modeling of higher-level thinking:


The following books contain examples for lesson formats to teach reading strategies for both narrative and informational text:

The following book provides examples of lessons that move students to higher levels of thinking when they are reading stories:


In addition to many suggestions for teaching strategies, these two books describe how teachers can gradually shift responsibility for comprehension to students and move them toward independence:


The following are very practical articles on comprehension from The Reading Teacher (www.reading.org/General/Publications/Journals/RT.aspx):

Comprehension Instruction: What to Look For

- Frequently  - Occasionally  - Rarely  - Never

1. Do all teachers emphasize comprehension, even with beginning readers?
2. Do teachers set clear purposes for reading and follow them up after reading?
3. Do the purposes teachers set for reading require higher-level thinking?
4. Do teachers model for students how to think about reading?
5. Do teachers focus discussions after reading on higher-level thinking?
6. Do teachers gradually release responsibility for comprehension to students?
7. Do teachers have students read both narrative and informational text?
Find it or Figure it Out

**Reading Standard 1:** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (anchor)
Find it or Figure it Out

*Tropical Rain Forests*

1. (P 4-5) Figure out if there are any rain forests in Africa and Australia.

2. (P 6-7) Find out what high and low temperatures in tropical rain forests usually are and how much rain they get.

3. (P 8-9) Figure out how a rain forest is like a cake.

4. (P 10-11) Figure out which layer of the forest is as tall as many adults.

5. (P 12-13) Figure out which part of a rain forest is hard to walk through.

6. (P 14-15) Find out what epiphytes are and how they help trees.
Figure out if there are any rain forests in Africa and Australia.

**What is a Tropical Rain Forest?**

Tropical rain forests are the world’s richest forests. They cover only seven percent of the Earth’s land. Yet, more than half of the world’s plant and animal species live in tropical rain forests.

The most important rain forests are near the equator. They lie in the tropics—the area between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.
Find out what high and low temperatures in tropical rain forests usually are and how much rain they get.

Tropical rain forests grow in Central America, South America, Africa, India and Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and on islands in the Pacific Ocean.

Almost 50 percent of the world’s tropical rain forests are in Brazil, Zaire, and Indonesia.

Tropical rain forests are warm, wet, and green all year. The temperature rarely goes above 93°F (34°C) or drops below 68°F (20°C).

The sun shines almost every day. But the forest’s warm, humid air holds so much moisture that it also rains almost every day. At least 80 inches (203 centimeters) of rain falls each year.
Figure out how a rain forest is like a cake.

THE FIVE LAYERS OF A TROPICAL RAIN FOREST

If you could cut through a rain forest like a cake, you would find five layers. From top to bottom, these layers are:

- Canopy
- Understory
- Shrub layer
- Herb layer
- Forest floor

The canopy is made up of tall trees that tower 75 to 150 feet (23 to 45 meters) above the forest floor.

The tops of the tallest trees rise above the canopy. These tall trees, called emergents, may grow 200 feet (61 meters) high.
The overlapping branches of the canopy allow very little sunlight and rain to reach the forest floor.

The understory is made up of smaller trees. They may reach only 12 feet (4 meters) in height. The air in the understory is very humid. The temperature is high—about 90°F (32°C).

The shrub layer consists of woody plants that grow up to 6 feet (2 meters) high. The herb layer has small green plants.
Figure out which part of the rain forest is hard to walk through.

The forest floor is covered with a thin layer of fallen leaves. Fungi and insects thrive in the shallow soil and leaf litter.

Because so little rain and sunlight reach the forest floor, not many plants grow there. So it is often easy to walk through a rain forest. Jungle, or dense vegetation, is found in places where more sunlight reaches the ground.
Find out what epiphytes are and how they help trees.

RAIN FOREST HABITATS

Each layer of the rain forest provides a special home for plants and animals. Climbing plants and thick vines called lianas grow from the forest floor. They twine around the trunks and branches of trees. These plants and vines connect the different layers of the rain forest.

Epiphytes are air plants. They are found in every layer. Epiphytes grow on other plants and get their...
Find it or Figure it Out with Narrative Text

Sarah Plain and Tall

1. (P 1) Figure out what Anna tells Caleb not to get so close to.
2. (P 2) Find out what Mama said when Caleb was born.
3. (P 3) Figure out what month of the year it is when the story begins.
4. (P 4). Find out what mama’s songs were about.
5. (P 5) Find out why papa says he doesn’t sing any more.
6. (Pp 6-7). Find out if papa was looking for a new housekeeper.
7. (Pp 8-9) Figure out why the children smiled after reading the letter from Sarah.
Teaching a Find it or Figure it Out Lesson Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

Set purpose for lesson.

“Today we are going to learn how to find answers to questions and how to figure out answers when the text doesn’t tell you using the details in the text as clues.”

Model how to answer the first question. (“I do, you watch.”)
Figure out if there are any rain forests in Africa and Australia.

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Teaching a Find it or Figure it Out Lesson Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

• Set purpose for lesson.

• Model how to answer the first question. ("I do, you watch.")

• Invite class to help you answer the second question. ("I do, you help.")

• Put students in trios. Give them one copy of the text to share and have them answer the remaining questions. ("You do it together. I help.")

• Bring the class back together and have students explain where they found the answers or what details let them figure out the inferences.

• Continue to do lessons using the Find it or Figure it Out framework. When your formative assessments of the trio’s interactions tell you that students can find answers and make inferences, have them answer the questions independently. ("You do it alone. I watch.")
CCSS Standards in a Find it or Figure it Out Lesson

• **Reading Standard 1:** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (anchor)

• **Speaking and Listening Standard 1 (K, 1st and 2nd):** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

• **Speaking and Listening Standard 1 (3rd, 4th and 5th):** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) on grade level topics and texts building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
Roadblocks to Vocabulary Instruction

• The belief that vocabulary instruction is learning definitions.
• Teachers are overwhelmed by the size of the task.
• The difficulty of assessing vocabulary growth.
Vocabulary Instruction: What to Look For

❑ Frequently  ❑ Occasionally  ❑ Rarely  ❑ Never

1. Do all teachers, even in the early grades, focus on building word meanings?

2. Do teachers teach meanings for important new words students will encounter in their reading?

3. Do teachers teach students to use context and morphology to figure out word meanings?

4. Do teachers teach academic or technical vocabulary needed to learn math, science and social studies?

5. Do teachers take time each day for read-aloud and independent reading?

6. Do teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for words?
Roadblocks to Literacy in the Content Areas

- Subject teachers think teaching reading is someone else’s job.
- Teachers teach the way they were taught.
- Teachers avoid reading in math, science and social studies.
Content-Area Literacy Instruction: What to Look For

☑ Frequently  ☑ Occasionally  ☑ Rarely  ☑ Never

1. Do your teachers teach the academic or technical vocabulary in every subject they teach?
2. Do your teachers include writing, especially quick-writes to help students learn content?
3. Do your teachers include student research and inquiry to help students learn content?
4. When teachers have students read a common text, do they provide comprehension instruction on that text?
What Principals Need to Know about Teaching and Learning Reading

• The Common Core State Standards present America’s schools with unprecedented challenges.

• Research and accumulated professional knowledge is adequate to help schools meet these challenges.

• We wrote our book to help you implement state-of-the-art reading instruction in your school!
Questions?