

Building Comprehension and Community in K-8 Classrooms



The DSC Mission



To help children develop
to their full potential -
academically, ethically,
socially,
and emotionally



A Commitment to the Whole Child

ACADEMIC Achievement · **ETHICAL** Development · **SOCIAL** Skills ·
EMOTIONAL Well-being

Reflection

- *What is challenging about helping students learn to read with comprehension?*
- *What is challenging about building community and helping students learn to work together?*

Dual Goals of Comprehension Instruction

- To provide students with strategies to help them make sense of texts.
- To provide opportunities for students to work together and to develop socially and ethically.

A Tea by Angela Johnson

A Tea by Angela Johnson

The invitation said,
A tea for Mothers and Daughters.
I didn't even tell Lucille about it
and threw the envelope into the garbage
can beside the TV in Dad's office.
And I was happy when he found it
and looked like he might cry.
I'd stopped crying about being mom-free
but had to make sure nobody forgot it—
and in the end wound up with Dad holding
a tea cup and cookies on his knees,
talking with women
about dress sizes and their husbands.

Reading Comprehension Strategies

- Retelling
- Visualizing
- Wondering/Questioning
- Making Inferences
- Understanding Text Structure
- Determining Important Ideas
- Synthesizing
- Summarizing

Reading Comprehension: What Works*

- **Teacher-directed instruction in comprehension strategies**
- **Opportunities for peer and collaborative learning**
- **Occasions for students to talk to a teacher and one another about their responses to reading**
- **Large amounts of time for actual text reading at independent reading level**

Social Values

- **Responsibility**
- **Respect**
- **Caring**
- **Fairness**
- **Helpfulness**

Strategy Development K-8

Comprehension Strategies									
Nine comprehension strategies, introduced where developmentally appropriate									
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Retelling	●	●	○						
Making connections/ Using schema	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Visualizing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Wondering/Questioning	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Making inferences	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Determining important ideas		○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Understanding text structure		○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Summarizing			○	○	●	●	●	●	●
Synthesizing					○	●	●	●	●

● Strategy taught directly ○ Strategy taught informally

Social Skills Development

Social Skills and Community Building Examples of social skills and where they are emphasized									
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Learning and using basic classroom procedures	●	●							
Speaking clearly	●	●							
Taking turns	●	●	●	●					
Appreciating and respecting one another's ideas	●	●	●	●					
Giving reasons to support thoughts and opinions	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Talking and listening to one another	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Using prompts to add to another person's thinking		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Asking clarifying questions				●	●	●	●	●	●
Reaching agreement				●	●	●	●	●	●
Discussing opinions respectfully				●	●	●	●	●	●
Confirming that you understand another person					●	●	●	●	●
Including one another					●	●	●	●	●
Contributing to group work					●	●	●	●	●
Giving and receiving feedback						●	●	●	●

BUT...what about Middle School?

....shouldn't they already *KNOW* how to read?

The Catch 22 of Middle School

Instruction

- 70% of older readers require some form of remediation in literacy.
- Their most common problem is that they are unable to comprehend what they read.
- Text demands increase as students enter middle school.

AND

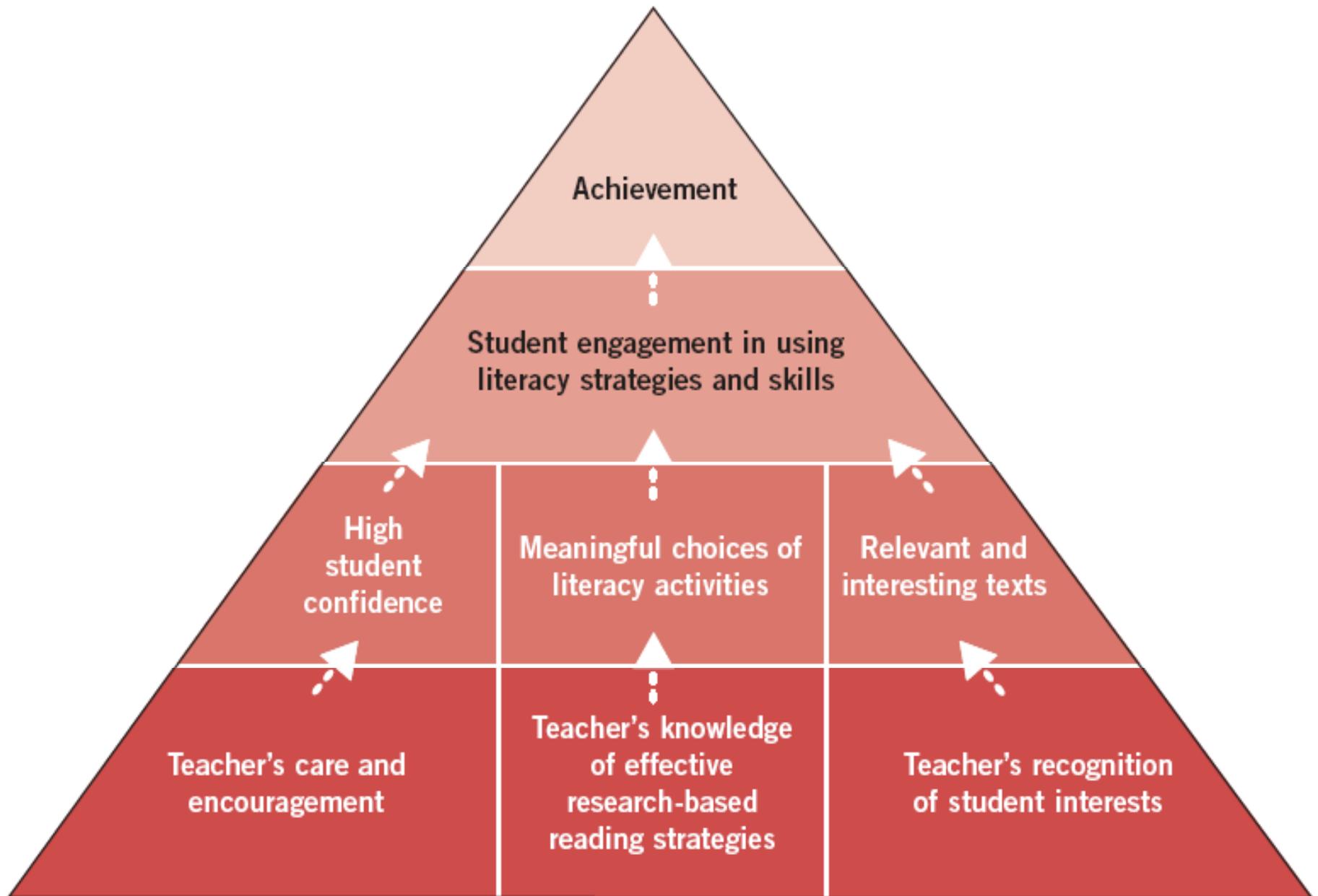
- Less time is allocated for literacy instruction.

What do Adolescent Readers Need?

- **Comprehension strategies to unlock meaning**
- **Sufficient background knowledge**
- **Ability to recognize nonfiction text structures**
- **Purpose for reading**
- **Self-monitoring skills (metacognition)**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Engagement**



Key Elements of Student Engagement



**Intrinsic academic
motivation
is killed off by
academic failures.**

Michael Pressley, 2002

Recommendations from *Reading Next*

- Direct, *explicit* comprehension instruction
- *Motivation* and self-directed learning
- Text-based *collaborative* learning
- *Strategic* tutoring
- Ongoing *formative* assessment of students
- *Extended* time for literacy

Harnessing Adolescents' Social Energy

Adolescents need

- Opportunities to interact
- Prompts and language to extend conversation
- Skills for both disagreeing and reaching consensus
- Strategies for giving and receiving feedback
- Voice and choice in what they read, write, think and talk about

Grade 6 Lesson - Days 1 and 2

Day 1: Read-aloud

- Class brainstorms prompts to extend conversation
- Teacher introduces and reads *Train to Somewhere*
- Students discuss plot, setting, and characters in the story
- Students reflect on partner conversations

Day 2: Strategy Lesson

- Teacher reviews prompts to extend conversation
- Teacher highlights clues to inferences in *Train to Somewhere*
- Partners discuss inferences at various stops in the story

Grade 6 Lesson - Days 3 and 4

Day 3: Guided Strategy Practice

- Teacher reviews prompts to extend conversation
- Partners work with an excerpt to explore causes in text
- Class discusses excerpt together

Day 4: Independent Strategy Practice

- Teacher reviews making inferences
- Students read texts at their independent level
- Teacher models “Stop and Ask Questions” using *why* questions
- Students reread independently, stopping at 10-minute intervals to record *why* questions on sticky notes
- Partners discuss questions

Lesson on *Inference* - Grade 6

Video: Decide who will focus on

- **The students' thinking and behavior**
- **The teacher's actions**

Discuss the Video

- *What did you notice about the students' interactions?*
- *How did the teacher's actions impact the students' thinking and behavior?*

Building Social Structures into the Classroom

Students develop socially and ethically through:

- ✓ Class meetings
- ✓ Cooperative Structures
- ✓ Learning social skills
- ✓ Discussing ethical issues that arise in books
- ✓ Discussing and problem-solving their work together
- ✓ Applying prosocial values to their interactions and lives

Cooperative Structures

- Think, Pair, Share
- Turn to Your Partner
- Think, Pair, Write
- Heads Together
- Group Brainstorming

Discussion Prompts: Explicitly Taught

- “I agree with _____ because...”
- “I disagree with _____ because...”
- “In addition to what _____ said, I think...”
- “I heard you say _____. Did I get that right?”

Why use Read-alouds with Adolescents?

Reading aloud:

- Supports deeper understanding of more sophisticated text
- Allows students to access & analyze texts beyond their independent reading level
- Allows time to apply strategies to a wider variety of genres and text structures
- Builds content-area vocabulary
- Provides an engaging forum for discussion
- Allows teachers to meet diverse reading levels
- Teaches students & strategies - beyond “teaching” books

ELL

- **Build on students' prior knowledge**
- **Create meaningful contexts**
- **Provide opportunities for practice and application through Cooperative Learning**
- **Ensure students have a safe environment**
- **Support with clear goals and immediate, corrective feedback**

Individualized Daily Reading (IDR)

1.33

- **Daily, sustained reading in texts at appropriate reading levels**
- **Students read up to 30 minutes every day**
- **Teacher plays an active role**
 - **Provides a library of books in different genres and levels**
 - **Helps students select books at appropriate levels**
 - **Confers with and assesses individual students**
 - **Teaches self-monitoring skills**
 - **Reinforces reading comprehension strategies**

Independent Reading: A Critical Component

Research indicates:

- Good readers get better because they read more.
- Poor readers become poorer readers because they read less.
- Independent reading in appropriately challenging texts with support leads to improvement in word reading and comprehension.
- Conversations before, during, and after independent reading stimulate deeper understandings and can motivate struggling readers.
- Kindergarten students are certain they will learn to read.
- Student indifference to reading is the norm by Grade 6.

Independent Reading & Reading Achievement

Percentile	Independent Reading Minutes Per Day	Words Read Per Year
98	65	4,358,000
90	21.1	1,823,000
80	14.2	1,146,000
70	9.6	622,000
60	6.5	423,000
50	4.6	282,000
40	3.2	200,000
30	1.3	106,000
20	0.7	21,000
10	.1	8,000
2	0	0

“Ironically, when teachers are pressed for time, independent reading is usually the first thing to be cut. Yet a carefully monitored independent reading program is the single most important part of your reading instructional program.”

Routman, 2006. *Reading Essentials*.

Making Meaning: What students say

Danielle, Grade 3

“Visualizing is like when you are reading a chapter book with no pictures and you get all of the ideas out of the book and into your own mind.”

Jessica, Grade 6

“When we were talking to our partners I noticed that my conversation grew, like I was using words I didn’t know I knew. The conversation lasted longer and my partner grew also and I learned a lot about my book and my strategies.”

Purpose

Jill Millican

Today
At your college graduation

I marveled

That I saw you last
In Junior High
Taught you last
In fifth grade

When I glimpsed
Your easy gait
From the bleachers

Recognized you
In cap and gown
Honor tassels swinging
recklessly
You were the same

Only six feet tall

Now
You'll work for a bank

I asked you
What I taught
That made a difference

And you said
"Nothing."
"It was the way
You spoke
Of your big dog
And how
You treated people

Because as a kid
I needed
A reason
To come to
school."

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