

Reading Comprehension in Grade 1

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Abstract

In primary grades, school success is synonymous with reading success. The B.C. Language Arts Program focuses on teaching reading comprehension and fluency, however, in my experience teaching Grade 1, the majority of class time is spent on the alphabet and phonetics. Educators have known for some time that comprehension is the most important aspect of reading and needs to be emphasized from the beginning of instruction. The purpose of this project was to review the literature on reading comprehension, especially as it pertains to instruction in Grade 1 classrooms. I begin Chapter 1 by explaining my motivation for investigating reading comprehension and the British Columbia context in which it is represented. This leads to the rationale and project overview. Chapter 2 includes a description of the theoretical foundation of reading and a literature review on reading comprehension strategies. Based on the literature review, I designed a workshop for teachers to share my growing understanding of instruction in reading comprehension.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In a world of continuous change, the ability of individuals to plan and implement their own learning without external direction is the key to success. Learning is nothing if it is not a deeply reflective activity in which every new idea is internalized and used to refine, or to change, or to upgrade, earlier, more naive understandings. This intrinsically driven learning gives children a greater sense of mastery and control and is what leads to successful life-long learning. Learning is a consequence of thinking (Abbott, 1997 cited in Premier's Technology Council; *A Vision for 21st Century Education*, 2010).

This document is a description and a summary of a project undertaken in partial fulfillment of the M.Ed. requirements at the University of Victoria. The project involved an in-depth literature review in the area of reading comprehension, particularly as it pertains to Grade 1, as well as the development of a workshop plan for Grade 1 teachers based on key aspects addressed in the literature review.

In this chapter, I outline my personal history and interest in the project, the B.C. context for learning, and the rationale for the workshop. In subsequent chapters, I present a literature review of relevant topics, an outline of a teacher workshop focusing on how to use reading comprehension strategies in a Grade 1 literacy program, a discussion of how to make it relevant and applicable to the everyday grade 1 classroom, and reflections on my own learning experiences during the project. I conclude with implications for future research.

Personal History and Motivation

My professional journey in teaching has led me to my own deeply reflective activity, as I have continued learning, assessing, and re-learning how to teach primary students to read. A graduate of the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education in the late 1970s, I received a B.Ed. with a major in special education, but still felt unprepared to face a class of students who expected me to know what to do. Fortunately, my first job was not in front of a class of students, but in the field of special education.

In the role of Learning Assistance Teacher, using a "push-in" model, I helped teachers in special education with students who experienced difficulties in literacy learning. That initial job led me to change how I viewed the role of a teacher. The teachers I encountered at the time were finding it difficult to accommodate readers who struggled. Although they were following teachers' guides from prescribed texts, which told them what to teach, they were not fully considering how each individual was learning. Some teachers were still wondering how to get a child to complete the workbook pages in a reading series, which every student was expected to do.

My role may have provided support for teachers, but it was not supportive of the learner, since I was not considering how to assist individual children. In reality, I was one of the teachers "who no longer wonder[s] 'Who are you?' but instead decide[s] quickly 'What can we do to fix you?'" (Paley, 2004, p. 47).

It did not take me long after receiving my degree to realize that although my education program may not have told me what to teach, it did provide a good foundation regarding the learning process, which enabled me to better adapt to the changing

environment in the classroom. I discovered the importance of focusing on the learner, regardless of changes in reading theories. This focus on how to support the learner made me more appreciative of the wisdom of my more general and less prescriptive university courses in providing me with steps to follow.

I then moved to British Columbia, where my teaching positions were not in special education or as a learning support teacher, but in the classroom. Suddenly, I could better understand how my colleagues in Alberta had felt, as I was experiencing similar constraints in teaching and completing a Grade 1 program. Although the B.C. curriculum guide outlined best practices and provided indicators of learning for language arts, I observed that the measure of the literacy program was sometimes reduced to the reading level that students had attained by year's end. I began to think that if I had a better understanding of the reading process, the theory behind my work and the practice in the classroom would more closely align with my beliefs

Learning on the job means learning from students. Observing them helped to refine, change, or upgrade my personal, practical, and professional experiences. It was always informative to watch and listen to how children explored and learned; for example, a reading assessment could help discern more than just the reading level of a student; it could provide insight into understanding the way in which that student learns. My classroom field experience was helping me see that developing reading skills, like learning oral language, is not a linear process; children do not progress from sounds, to words, to sentences. A primary literacy program should use a model of immersion similar to learning to speak, not simply follow steps from alphabet knowledge to letter sounds as the initial skills of reading.

My experiences have provided a better understanding of the learner, so now my focus as a teacher is how the student can be supported in the learning process. I ask myself, “What practices will best support students in their learning process?” and “How can I help children on their journey?” It is important that I allow them to teach me about themselves and how they see the world.

The typical Grade 1 classroom today presents a widely diverse group of students. Many speak languages other than English at home, and the frequency of shared pre-reading and reading time as toddlers and preschoolers may be vastly different. As both a learning assistance teacher and a classroom teacher, I have always tried to find ways to assist teachers to support reading instruction for all learners, and that search continues, as I try to become more responsive to every learner who enters my first grade classroom.

My professional knowledge has deepened through research, attending conferences and partaking in professional development programs. The day-to-day planning and delivery of lessons, and learning from students in the classroom, have kept me challenged and enthusiastic about teaching. My goal continues to be to expand my foundational understanding of the process of learning to read.

I want to be able to clearly articulate what teachers do in a language arts reading program and their intended purposes. A school district could introduce the latest professionally packaged reading program; district administration may ask that all books be leveled; parents may want a spelling program as part of a language arts program; but before I can teach effectively in any such environment, I must understand the beliefs and theories of reading and teaching in general, and be able to synthesize and make explicit my personal beliefs about teaching and learning.

Context for Learning to Read in British Columbia

Effective teachers make instructional decisions based on their knowledge of literacy learning (based on sound research), clearly defined developmentally appropriate learning outcomes, and their knowledge of an individual student's strengths and needs. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 37)

Reading comprehension can be defined as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (RAND, 2001 as cited in Sweet & Snow, 2002, p. 23). Reading comprehension is the primary focus in the British Columbia Ministry of Education's English Language Arts Integrated Resource Package (2006) (hereafter referred to as the Language Arts IRP). The aim, goals, and learning outcomes of the Language Arts curriculum are based on a holistic approach to reading; the four goals of which are “to comprehend and respond to oral and written language critically, creatively, and articulately”; to communicate one's ideas; “to think critically and creatively, and to reflect on and articulate their thinking and learning”; and to develop an understanding of self (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 3). Although mentioned in the overview of a Grade 1 program, isolated skills such as developing word-decoding strategies are not considered to be a primary focus.

Thinking skills are woven into the B.C. Language Arts IRP for Kindergarten to Grade 3, and under every section of the prescribed learning outcomes of speaking/listening, reading/viewing, and writing/representing. Under the reading and viewing section of the curriculum, for example, the focus is on purpose, such as

providing students with opportunities to read, using a variety of texts and strategies before, during and after reading ((British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 53). There is a connection with thinking and making meaning in improving comprehension. According to the Language Arts IRP for primary students, learning to comprehend entails “the process of making meaning with and from text, whether the text is oral, written, visual, or multi-media” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 17). The ability to understand and draw conclusions from information whether written, spoken, or displayed visually, and to then defend these conclusions rationally, is a major goal of education (British Columbia Ministry of Education).

Reading comprehension, which plays a fundamental role throughout the school years and life in general, occurs when a reader understands and can interpret a text, and “should be an integral part of reading instruction in the primary grades in oral language, vocabulary and listening comprehension” (Sweet & Snow, 2002, p. 23). If the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension, then reading programs must teach and support learners in reaching this goal.

Reading comprehension became an important focus for educators in part as a result of research by Dolores Durkin in 1978. Her study of 40 intermediate grade teachers’ social studies lessons revealed that less than 1% of instructional time was spent on comprehension (Durkin, 1978, p. 504). Instead of teaching students how to comprehend, teachers were simply assessing comprehension, often only by asking questions about the material just read. The teachers tested comprehension perhaps with the assumption that if their students simply read, and then were tested, they would become self-regulated readers who used comprehension strategies. It appeared that the “classroom instruction

focus[d] on measuring comprehension of individual stories or text” that was read (Eilers & Pinkley, 2006, p. 13). Durkin’s study introduced educators to the significance of teaching comprehension strategies, along with practice in application through modeling, and reminded educators that the main purpose of reading is to comprehend.

Recognizing the importance of comprehension strategies in education was one thing but whether that translated into practical application at the school level was another. Twenty years later, the US Department of Education and the Department of Health commissioned the National Research Council (NRC) to study the various aspects of the problem of reading difficulties. Their report, entitled *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (PRD), had been commissioned as the Department of Education had found that any overall improvement in reading comprehension had been negligible (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. 78). As a result an investigation by a committee of experts in reading, reviewed research on teaching reading and were then tasked with translating the latter into advice and guidelines on what could be done to better position students in pre-Kindergarten through third grade for success in reading in Grade 4 and above. The PRD identified the main areas of concern were that students had not been acquiring the comprehension skills or the meta-cognitive strategies that they would require in order to become good readers (Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998, p. 220). Therefore, the report called for direct instruction of comprehension strategies in the primary grades taught alongside the more procedural skills such as alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness and understanding new vocabulary. The panel gave the recommendation to teach students to use comprehension strategies, the ‘read to learn’ skills, along with teaching the ‘learn to read’ skills.

One of the studies the PRD looked at was a longitudinal study done in Canada tracked students' reading comprehension from Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Phillips, Norris & Mason, 1996). Three groups of Kindergarten classes from 12 schools were asked to implement, in addition to the provincially authorized program, a reading routine with beginning-reading booklets for 24 weeks. The booklets were designed to include features such as high frequency words, illustrations that fit the text and topics familiar to children. Of the three groups, one group used the booklets at home, the second group used the books both at home and school, and the third group used the books in school only. One booklet a week was introduced and the method of instruction for the school/home and school only was a guided participation model designed to promote interaction among the children, as well as between adults and children. The program was also designed to improve long-term reading comprehension by developing, in the short-term, actions fundamental to reading such as engaging in discussion of one's understanding. Assessments were conducted at the beginning of Kindergarten and then at end of Kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grades. By the end of the Grade 3 the children in the school only treatment group increased scores by almost one-fifth of a standard deviation compared to the control group (Phillips, Norris & Mason, 1996, p. 187). Thus, the researchers inferred that reading achievement in upper elementary can be supported by the introduction of early literacy concepts, such as the structures, functions and language of print, in the primary literacy program (Phillips, Norris & Mason, 1996, p. 191). The direction to focus on reading comprehension in Kindergarten to Grade 3 was a change in the way of thinking about reading and primary education.

Although the PRD report of 1998 gave the recommendation to teach students to use comprehension strategies, Pearson and Duke (2002) suggest that there seems to be a widely held view that it is not wise to teach comprehension strategies to young children who are still learning to decode text. Pearson and Duke argue that along with phonics and word identification there should be an equal emphasis on vocabulary and text talk. In fact, teachers should be as deliberate about comprehension instruction from the very beginning of a student's schooling as they are about lessons in alphabet knowledge, letter-sound relationship, and phonemic sounds (Almasi & Hart, 2011; Roberts & Duke, 2010). Instruction must include a "focus on the code-based skills needed for word recognition, as well as the broad language-skills needed for comprehension" (Adlof, Perfetti, & Catts 2011, p. 206). Indeed, from the start of a child's schooling the focus should be to understand or make meaning of what is written, listened to, or viewed.

Pressley (2002) argues, that comprehension strategies should be taught from the beginning in the primary grades, as we now know that long-term instruction of sophisticated comprehension strategies improves students' understanding and memory of texts that are read. Block and Johnson (2002) state that, by second grade many children have not learned, or perhaps have not been taught, to decode and comprehend simultaneously. It has been well established that "if these children cannot comprehend well after three years of instruction, continuing the same instruction will not likely raise their reading abilities to grade level, even if their decoding skills are on grade level" (Block 2000a; Hesselbrink, 1998; King, 1994; as cited in Block & Johnson, 2002, p. 54). For many students, if teachers do not focus explicitly on comprehending while reading, then the students do not actively read for meaning.

Unfortunately, reading instruction in many schools has focused primarily on the “easy to teach and assess” linguistic features such as alphabet knowledge and phonemic awareness (Duke & Block, 2012, p. 57). However, if children are reading only decodable texts such as “the cat has a tan hat” then students will not learn that thinking is their real goal (Cunningham & Allington, 2007, p. 118). “Comprehension and decoding can exist side by side as instructional goals and valued student outcomes in an exemplary and comprehensive literacy program for primary grade children” (Pearson & Duke, 2002, p. 251).

However, when Duke and Block (2012) examined research and reviews of research 14 years after the 1998 PDR report was published, they found that in the area of comprehension, which included vocabulary, conceptual and content knowledge, and comprehension strategies, none of the recommendations had been widely adopted, concurring with the 2009 report done by the National Center for Educational Evaluation (NCEE), which had found no statistically significant improvement in students’ reading comprehension since 1998. Duke and Block (2012) identified the following three key obstacles preventing widespread adoption of best practices to improve reading comprehension: 1) limited time to implement recommendations, 2) the tendency to focus reform on the ‘easier-to-learn reading skills’ (such as alphabet knowledge, decoding) while vocabulary work, conceptual and content were largely ignored; and 3) teachers’ insufficient professional development in the area of reading comprehension. They claimed that teachers do not know how to effectively teach, support, or indicate progress of comprehension skills knowledge, and found that reading comprehension strategies were being neglected. The combination of these three obstacles encapsulates the

necessity for this project. Indeed, teachers need to be provided with opportunities to learn research-based best practices in comprehension instruction as part of their professional development on literacy instruction.

As described earlier, my workshop will emphasize the importance of explicitly teaching comprehension in the early years and strategically scaffolding comprehension in all grades. Specifically, the workshop is aimed at practicing Grade 1 teachers and is aligned with the British Columbia Ministry of Education English Language Arts Integrated Resource Package (2006). The workshop begins with a review of relevant and scholarly literature in order to identify research-based best practices. Subsequently, these best practices are presented to teachers with the goal of helping them understand the theory, and incorporate comprehension strategies into everyday teaching that can be easily adapted to suit all learners. The workshop is designed to support and encourage teachers' own reflections and observations as valuable aspects of comprehension instruction in their classrooms.

Project Overview

Chapter 1 explored my interests in reading comprehension in early primary grades (especially Grade 1), and outlined the focus of the project on comprehension in reading instruction. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical foundations of the project, including socio-cultural theories of learning, and the four main reading theories. Relevant scholarly literature that examines research-based best practices in comprehension instruction, with specific attention to strategies for Grade 1 students, is also reviewed. Chapter 3 outlines the design for the teacher workshop that focuses on how to use reading comprehension strategies in a Grade 1 literacy program. Finally, in Chapter 4, I connect relevant

literature to reflections of my own learning experiences that occurred throughout the creation of the project, and conclude with comments on implications for future research.

The questions that guided my inquiry were: 1) What is the theoretical basis for the teaching of reading comprehension? 2) What are the recommended practices for effective reading comprehension, especially at the Grade 1 level? 3) How might I design a professional development workshop on reading comprehension instruction for Grade 1 teachers? In the following chapters I address these questions and describe how the answers informed the design of my workshop.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

What we understood from our experiences was that knowing wasn't just telling something back as we had received it. Knowing meant transformation and change, and a gradual awareness of what we had learned (Gallas, 1991, p. 50).

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the current research on reading comprehension instruction for primary students so as to ensure the best practices for a Grade 1 literacy program. This section includes a brief overview of the social constructivist theory of learning as a basic framework for modern literacy instruction, a summary of four theoretical models of reading, and a review of some of the research on reading comprehension, including an examination of explicit strategy instruction.

Social Construction of Learning

The social constructivist model of learning emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning. Vygotsky (1978) proposes a “zone of proximal development” as the place where children learn in relation to their existing knowledge and competencies, and in relation to those around them who model and scaffold their learning. People in children's immediate social context play an important role by helping them clarify and extend ideas. Children are active in the learning process, which contrasts sharply with an “empty vessel” theory that postulates that a child's mind is like a vacuum, waiting to be filled with knowledge. The social-constructivist approach in early childhood literacy views the primary grades as a place for social, emotional, physical and intellectual development (Morrow & Dougherty, 2011). This theory on how learning occurs has heavily influenced

the way we teach reading today, and can influence how educators perceive both the learner and the learner's environment or context of learning.

When teaching reading, learners need support that scaffolds or extends their understanding of new ideas and experiences presented in texts. Scaffolding is the assistance and feedback that supports the learner towards independent practice. When teaching a new comprehension strategy the teacher will use the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). First the teacher gives an explanation followed by modeling, guided practice, feedback, and independent practice and application. The learner gradually takes on more responsibility for his or her learning so the teacher is able to remove support (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 135). For example, in the case of making predictions while reading, the teacher gives an explanation of predicting, models through a think-aloud, followed by a shared reading of the text, subsequently followed by guided reading practice in small groups and finally, independent reading.

Reading Comprehension

In order to address the question of how teachers should teach reading, it is critical to examine the literature on reading comprehension, including the four most commonly held theories of reading: the bottom-up; top-down; interactive; and transactional (Rosenblatt, 1978). An understanding of these theories provides a platform for teachers as they strive to provide good reading instruction.

Bottom-up theory of reading.

The bottom-up theory sees learning to read as a progression from learning the parts of language to the whole text and its meaning. Children progress from letters and sounds,

to decoding words, then linking the words into phrases, sentences, and finally to whole text (Gough & Coskey, 1977). A teacher's main focus at the primary level is instruction of graphemes and phonemes more than comprehension or understanding of the text.

The bottom-up model has been criticized for its focus on decoding, which in turn has been criticized for leaving readers so bogged down in deciphering the text that they are not able to focus on the job of comprehending the author's message.

Top-down theory of reading.

As a counter to an over-reliance on decoding with the bottom-up view of reading, a cognitive constructivist, or top-down process, of reading was introduced (Tierney & Pearson, 1994). It views reading as an active cognitive process of connecting information from the text with the reader's prior knowledge. Word identification is still important, but background knowledge is seen as a key ingredient in the creation of meaning (Tierney & Pearson, 1994); therefore, reading instruction based on this model places less emphasis on decoding and word recognition and more emphasis on pre-reading activities that develop students' knowledge of the reading topic (Stanovich, 1980).

Interactive theory of reading.

The interactive theory of reading combines both the bottom-up and the top-down processes, recognizing the importance of both the text and the reader in the reading process (Rumelhart, 1994). The interactive theory of reading believes that good readers are able to predict what they will read based on their knowledge of syntax and semantics, along with their background knowledge. A reader's use of bottom-up or top-down knowledge will vary depending on what is needed as they are reading.

Scaffolding instruction is an underlying principle of the interactive model.

Vygotsky's (1978) "zone of proximal development" theory proposes the GRR and interactive theory scaffold learning that uses the routine of a) introduce (explanation), b) teach (guided practice), and c) model. Readers use the reading comprehension strategies of accessing their prior knowledge and experiences, as well as determining meaning from contextual clues found in the print.

Reflective of the interactive theory of reading, teachers encourage the use of strategies before, during, and after reading, including the making of predictions, questioning, and re-reading when necessary, as ways of supporting student comprehension and encouraging them to become independent readers (Cunningham & Allington, 2007; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pressley, 2002b). However, various word identification strategies are also taught to students in small group settings based on the student's needs.

Transactional theory.

The final reading theory considered in this project is Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory, that claims it is the reader in the reading process who creates meaning, stating that the construction "of meanings involves both the author's text and what the reader brings to it" (1978, p. 14). The text is simply a bunch of squiggles on a page until the reader and text transact, a process that leads to a unique construction of meaning. Although originally a literary theory, it has been adopted in the reading field due to its focus on the relationship among reader, text and context, and its emphasis on meaning, response and interpretation. Similar to the interactive theory, the transactional

theory contends that successful readers are “active readers” who read a variety of texts for different purposes.

Similar to the interactive theory, the transactional theory contends that successful readers are “active readers” who read a variety of texts for different purposes. However, the transactional theory places more emphasis on the socio-cultural constructs of reading, including the relationships between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978) and the various contextual factors that influence the reading event. The beliefs underlying Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading reflect students’ needs for social interaction, choice of text, and a variety of opportunities for engagement, as well as the use of coaching, scaffolding and modeling during instruction (Allington, 2007; Pressley, 2000). Reading pedagogy based on Rosenblatt’s transactional theory recognizes the need and benefits of using prior knowledge, as well as developing awareness of their own progress as a reader, and emphasizes discourse to deepen readers’ connections and comprehension.

Comprehension Strategies

Reading theories may emphasize comprehension to a greater or lesser extent however, researchers have argued for the importance of teaching comprehension strategies alongside decoding skills as students learn to read in the primary grades (Block & Johnson 2002; Pearson 2009; Pearson & Duke 2002). Teachers can teach vocabulary development, conceptual and content knowledge, and comprehension strategies, along with alphabet letters and high-frequency words. Good readers actively construct meaning as they read, are self-motivated, and regularly monitor their understanding through questioning and rereading (Flood, Lapp & Fisher, 2003). We now understand that readers

use metacognitive processes to monitor, control, and advance the construction of meaning; therefore, it should be the goal of teachers to support students in their own process of questioning, reviewing, rereading and revising to support their own understanding of texts.

Almasi and Hart (2011) highlight that when the instructional emphasis is on decoding by itself, or as the main focus, it has no significant impact on comprehension. Reading First programs, such as the US federal government's *No Child Left Behind* legislation, were intended to provide explicit instruction on vocabulary and comprehension as well as in phonics, phonemic awareness and fluency, but in practice focused largely on the latter three areas. Almasi and Hart describe the study done for the United States Department of Education, in which the findings indicated that such code-based interventions as phonics, phonemic awareness and fluency had no significant impact on comprehension for children in Grades 1, 2, or 3 (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008 as cited in Almasi & Hart, 2011, p. 251). Comprehension strategies do not develop well for the majority of 'average' students left on their own unless teachers promote that students be strategic readers aware of the strategies that they use to help in the understanding. Pressley (2002a) found that "comprehension strategies can and should be taught beginning in the primary grades with it now understood that long-term instruction of sophisticated comprehension strategies clearly improves student understanding and memory of texts that are read" (p. 291). Readers who are strategic have a repertoire of strategies and actively process the text and make decisions as they read (Almasi & Hart, 2011).

By exploring strategies that good readers use to organize and make meaning of texts,

researchers have identified skills that could be used to explicitly teach other students when encountering text. Much research on reading comprehension, although not generally focused on the primary grades, recognizes the superior meta-cognitive processes of good readers as they encounter informational text or longer narratives (Duke & Pearson 2002, Sweet & Snow 2002, Block & Johnson 2002, Flood, Lapp & Fisher 2003, Roberts & Duke 2010). Duke and Pearson present comprehension strategies that research has shown to be effective in improving students' comprehension of text (2002, p. 212-224), and they also review "routines" which they define as integrating several strategies in a single activity (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 212). Routines refers to a set of practices that, as part of the overall approach, teach students to question, review, reread, and revise, so as to monitor their own reading.

What good readers do is set a purpose for reading, previewing and predicting; activate prior knowledge; monitor, clarify and fix; create visual representations; draw inferences; self-question and think aloud; and summarize and retell (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Eilers & Pinkley, 2006; Strachen & Billman, 2011). The comprehension strategies used by good readers "can be taught, beginning with teacher explanations and modeling of the strategies followed by scaffolded student practice of comprehension strategies during reading" (Pressley, 2002a, p. 306).

Dougherty-Stahl (2004) reviewed the research on comprehension strategies taught to students in Kindergarten to Grade 2. The preliminary literature review involved computerized searches for quantitative and qualitative studies, though the exact number of studies used was not provided. Teacher information was also gathered from informal interactions, classroom observations and reports by student teachers during their field

experiences as to which strategies were used as part of the classroom practice. The data from the computerized search was used to make recommendations for teachers regarding which instructional techniques could be used with confidence, and which may need to be used more cautiously because of a lack of empirical support. The strategies from the review of research and the teacher survey were assigned to one of the four following categories: 1) substantiated by research and widely practiced; 2) not substantiated by research but widely used; 3) not yet been researched, but may hold some promise for future instructional practice; and 4) substantiated by research, but of limited use in the classroom (Dougherty-Stahl, 2004, p. 599).

The first category, suggesting best practices that are supported by research and used by teachers, includes guided/instructed retelling, story maps, teacher-generated questions, question-answer relationships and reciprocal teaching. In this category, strategies widely adopted by teachers include a routine of guided reading, opportunities to talk about the text (as in retelling or story maps), and an environment that includes questions from teacher or students (as in reciprocal teaching).

In the second category, strategies not substantiated by research but widely used, she discusses selection of the main ideas, K-W-L (know, wonder and learned), and picture walk. As Stahl says: “The absence of evidence supporting the use of K-W-L does not mean it is ineffective, only that it has not been proved to be effective” (2004, p. 605).

In the third category, strategies that may hold some promise for future instructional practice but had not yet had a wide research base, she identifies student-generated questions and summarization. She defines student-generated questioning as having text talk in groups (2004, p. 605). Dougherty-Stahl also emphasized the use of a text structure

as a promising strategy that involves questioning, clarifying, predicting and summarizing, followed by students taking turns leading the discussions.

In the fourth and final categories, research that has been found to be effective but not yet widely used, Dougherty-Stahl lists such strategies as: 1) activation of prior knowledge (which includes text talk); 2) directed reading-thinking activity (DR-TA); and 3) transactional strategy instruction.

The information on strategies that have, or have not been substantiated by research is useful along with the information on which strategies are used in the classroom. The most recent support from research still needs to translate into teaching. Therefore educators are still left with how to bring this knowledge into practice.

The problem may be addressed by Almasi and Hart (2011) who describe how teachers can translate comprehension strategies into their classroom practice. Rather than individual strategies, they suggest teaching readers to be strategic. Practices and strategies are organized under three categories: context, agency/metacognition, and scaffolding that lead to transfer (pp. 264-265). The intention is to move from having educators deciding which strategies should be taught, to fostering a classroom where the students are active participants in the reading event.

The shift from strategies to students who are active in the comprehension process is also evident in Duke, Pearson, Strachen and Billman (2011) 10 essential elements of effective reading comprehension. They list: 1) building disciplinary and world knowledge; 2) providing exposure to a volume and range of texts; 3) providing motivating texts and contexts for reading; 4) teaching strategies for comprehending; 5) teaching text structures; 6) engaging students in discussion; 7) building vocabulary and

language knowledge; 8) integrating reading and writing; 9) observing and assessing; and 10) differentiating instruction.

The U. S. Department of Education Educational Evaluation (Shanahan et al., 2010) repeats many of the same elements in the recommendations for improving comprehension in Kindergarten through grade 3.

Thus, researchers have stressed the importance of comprehension instruction in primary classrooms. Indeed, with respect to reading instruction, teachers should “be deliberate about comprehension from the very beginning” (Dougherty-Stahl, 2004, p. 607). Some teachers may find the task daunting as they decide where to begin from the cornucopia of suggestions. Based on my reading of the literature, I found reoccurring recommendations, which I found, were easier to recall if like ideas were grouped under a heading. Rather than focusing on which specific strategies are most effective to develop comprehension, I have compiled the many strategies suggested into a few headings. I used three categories: environment, opportunities, and anticipated structures. This organizational structure creates a manageable way to incorporate many research-based comprehension practices into primary grade classrooms. Understandably, many of the strategies begin to overlap as they are viewed from the three headings.

Environment.

One of the categories I synthesized from the research on comprehension is that the teacher needs to create a safe environment and provide motivating texts and context for reading (Almasi & Hart 2011; Duke 2004; Duke, Pearson, Strachen & Billman 2011; Pearson & Duke 2002; Roberts & Duke 2010). Teachers need to have authentic purposes for reading, and support all stages of comprehension from pre-reading to after-reading

activities. Expressed in the concept of a safe environment is the idea that students are learning and gaining in their understanding so small group activities support students learning. When reading something that initially does not make sense to an individual, the class and teacher support that person through the process of making meaning. Teachers engage in the Gradual Release of Responsibility model, providing students with “explanations and modeling of the strategies followed by scaffold student practice of comprehension strategies during reading” (Pressley, 2002a, p. 306).

Opportunities.

A second heading I identified was opportunities. Teachers need to design and implement activities that support the understanding of the texts being read by students in class (Almasi & Hart 2011; Duke, Bennett-Armistead & Roberts, 2003; Pearson & Duke 2002). These opportunities include building children’s “vocabulary knowledge, ensuring that they understand complex syntactic structures, teaching them to draw inferences, and supporting their understanding of abstract language” (Adlof, Perfetti, & Catts, 2011, p. 207).

Giving students plenty of opportunities to actively process text and make decisions supports the long-term goal to have readers who are strategic when reading (Almasi & Hart, 2011). Rather than a teacher prompting a student to use a particular strategy, students should be encouraged to make their own decisions regarding which strategy to use. The journey to independence requires plenty of opportunities in the classroom to participate in class discussions; answer higher level questions; field questions from other students; listen to a read-aloud; independently use a graphic organizer; re-read to a parent, teacher, or peer; write a journal entry; or enjoy a 15-20 minute daily free reading

time (Duke, Bennett-Armistead & Roberts, 2003; Pearson & Duke, 2002; Roberts & Duke, 2010).

Anticipated Structures.

The many opportunities listed above to actively process text may be practices common to a class. These practices may be routine, in that they become an integrated set of practices done regularly from one text to another. Research indicates that students often find comfort in familiar instructional routines and schedules in a class (Holdaway, 1984 as cited in Reutzel, 2011, p. 425). Children may experience a variety of interactive settings—whole class, small group, or individual—that all follow a familiar pattern. Applied to reading, routine suggests that there is an integrated and active approach to reading. Ideally, the strategies of predicting, accessing prior knowledge or experience, and setting a purpose will become automatic skills used when approaching an unknown text (Almasi & Hart, 2011; Dougherty-Stahl, 2009; Duke, Pearson, Strachen & Billman, 2011; Paris & Paris, 2007; Reutzel, 2011; Roberts & Duke, 2010).

The concept of anticipated structures also includes explicit instruction, modeling, collaborative use of strategy in action, scaffolding, guided practice, and independent practice (i.e., the Gradual Release of Responsibility model). Such a routine includes teachers modeling a particular reading strategy and supporting students to internalize and monitor their own use of the appropriate strategy (Duke, Pearson, Strachen & Billman, 2011; Eilers & Pinkley, 2006; Fisher, Lapp & Frey, 2011; Pearson & Duke, 2002; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta & Echevarria, 1998). Students' development of metacognition regarding reading strategies will assist them in their future encounters with text.

The routine or anticipated structure is an important part of teaching comprehension. As noted earlier, Duke, Pearson, Strachen and Billman (2011) described 10 essential elements of effective reading comprehension. Under the fourth essential element, teach strategies for comprehending, Duke, Pearson, Strachen and Billman list some strategies that research indicates are worth teaching. The items common in the literature review: 1) setting purposes for reading; 2) previewing and predicting; 3) activating prior knowledge; 4) monitoring, clarifying, and fixing; 5) visualizing and creating visual representation; 6) drawing inferences; 7) self-questioning and thinking aloud; and 8) summarizing and retelling (Duke, Pearson, Strachen & Billman, 2011, p. 64). I argue that all of these strategies could be grouped under “reading routines;” or multiple strategy formats (Shanahan et al., 2010, p. 14). The 1-3 are before-reading strategies, 4 and 5 are during-reading strategies, and 6-8 are post-reading strategies. The latter three post-reading strategies, although they may be labeled as after-reading thinking skills, students can also use while they read. By establishing and reinforcing these strategies as part of the regular reading routine in the primary grades, ideally readers will learn to activate the strategies automatically as they encounter new text throughout their school years and beyond.

Included under anticipated structures is the child-centered approach, where students are exposed to books and writing with more emphasis on problem solving than on direct instruction of skills (Almasi & Hart, 2011; Duke, Bennett-Armistead & Roberts, 2003; Pearson & Duke, 2002). Students’ discussions help them in meaning-making but they must be given the time and opportunities to learn from their peers, or clarify their own thoughts by discussing it in these settings (Roberts & Duke, 2010).

The Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA), one model of a routine practice (Dougherty-Stahl, 2004; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Ivey, 2002) is typical of routines that involve the teacher leading a discussion, eliciting predictions from the students that they must justify before reading or listening to a part of the text, then confirming or adapting their predictions. Reciprocal Teaching (RT), (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Palincsar, 1991; Paris & Paris, 2007) is an example of a routine practice that involves instruction occurring during reading. Initially, the teacher models the four comprehension strategies of clarifying, questioning, summarizing, and predicting through sections of the text, and later the student leader of a small group facilitates discussion using the four strategy routine and questions that help the group to summarize, clarify and predict through sections of the text (Dougherty-Stahl, 2004).

Other comprehension strategy instruction routines include Transactional Strategy Instruction (TSI), and Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) (Roberts & Duke, 2010). In TSI (Brown et al., 1996; Pressley et al., 1992, 1994, as cited in Roberts & Duke 2010, pp. 33-34) teachers introduce, model and scaffold the use of a variety of strategies, including accessing prior knowledge, summarizing, predicting, and generating questions. Similar to TSI, CORI (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004, as cited in Roberts & Duke 2010, pp. 34-35) also teaches multiple cognitive strategies as well as motivational strategies such as including personal experiences or interests in a particular topic to set goals.

Summary

Environment, opportunities, and anticipated structure are three general headings that teachers must consider when teaching reading comprehension. Students need to be given

time and opportunity for reading and discussing a text in a safe, supportive environment. In addition, students need multiple opportunities during the school day to read, talk, and/or respond to what they have read. Several reading routines can be done in peer-led small groups. The familiar reading routine has the information piece led by the leader and then modeled, the students offer guidance and support. Many scholars and researchers in the field of reading instruction have written about the importance of teachers creating an environment supporting comprehension activities within a routine that has varied opportunities for meaning-making.

The general guidelines of environment, opportunities, and anticipated structure correctly suggest that there is no ‘one right reading program’ and therefore this framework allows for teacher autonomy. There are choices regarding instructional practice, and teachers should make these choices thoughtfully. Rather than following a prescribed set of lessons and steps, Hall (2003) suggests that teachers look at distinguishing characteristics of effective literacy teacher practices (p. 321). She uses the three categories of curricular, organizational, and pedagogical to organized ones teaching practice. Under the latter, for example, Hall (2003) includes the “greater use of opportunistic/incidental teaching; instructional density, such as integrating word recognition, vocabulary, spelling and writing skills in reading activities and multiple goals for a single lesson” (p. 321). The framework also lends support for teachers to be masters of their classrooms and respects their professional autonomy to knowingly include, remove or re-instruct comprehension strategies depending on the different needs of the students in the class at the time.

According to Roberts and Duke (2009) “common characteristics of classrooms in which comprehension flourishes” (p. 24) include a focus on comprehension; teachers and students reading and talking about text in depth; and authentic purposes and texts for reading. Effective reading programs use a variety of approaches to develop student comprehension, Consideration of the three broad elements of environment, opportunities, and anticipated structure can assist Grade 1 teachers with their comprehension instruction as they integrate learning to read along with reading to learn.

Chapter 3 outlines the basis of the teacher workshop with the appendix of the PowerPoint® slides. The workshop focuses on the importance of comprehension in the ‘learn to read’ process, and provides teachers with suggestions of elements they can bring into a Grade 1 Language Arts program.

Chapter 3

Reading Comprehension Workshop: Rationale & Description

In this chapter, I offer a brief rationale for the workshop that I designed for Grade 1 teachers based on my understandings from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. I describe the workshop, explaining some of the content and intentions of the PowerPoint slides to be used with teachers.

Rationale

Essentially, the workshop promotes the concept that an effective primary literacy program involves teachers creating an environment that fosters literacy, ensures opportunities for different forms of discussion about text, and includes an approach to text that builds on students' prior knowledge in order for the children to make connections and to expand their vocabulary. During the workshop I emphasize how to teach reading comprehension, while also offering teachers a chance to build understanding of the theory and research behind the comprehension the various approaches and strategies. Consistent with the literature, I advance the idea that comprehension strategies need to be explicitly taught along with strategies to decode text from the very beginning of reading instruction. The workshop is intended to encourage teachers thinking and talking about children's journey to understanding and interpreting texts and aims to support teachers in their growing understanding of their students' complex literacy development. During the workshop, teachers are provided with time to discuss, practice, and reflect upon various approaches that are responsive to students' needs as they develop comprehension.

The design of my workshop for Grade 1 teachers was influenced by my

understanding of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, whereby learning, and specifically literacy development, is viewed as a social process in which the learner actively constructs meaning through interactions with others who are more knowledgeable. The Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), which is based on Vygotsky's theory, suggests that moving from explicit description, modeling, collaborative use of the strategy in action and guided practice, towards independent use will incrementally position students as independent learners. As discussed previously, research has shown that when early literacy programs do not offer a balance of procedural skills and higher-order literacy competencies many children do not learn to decode and comprehend simultaneously (Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002, p. 54). An insufficient emphasis on strategies for comprehension in Grade 1 has dire consequences for learners' progress in reading throughout the primary grades.

Description and Explanation of the Workshop

The two-hour workshop consists of a PowerPoint presentation interspersed with activities to help teachers understand the research behind reading comprehension and to develop their knowledge of anticipated structures, opportunities and environment that support comprehension instruction. As illustrated in the slides below, the PowerPoint presentation consists of several components including: (a) a consideration of teacher beliefs about reading pedagogy; (b) a brief overview of theory and background of reading comprehension; (c) a review of effective literacy teachers' practices; and (d) a consideration of the influence of assessment on instruction. Time is allotted for discussion on practical suggestions for application and implementation in the classroom. The agenda is displayed in Figure 1 below. (See Appendix A for slides and Appendix B

for post-workshop handout).

Figure 1. Workshop Agenda (Slides 1 and 2)

Figure 1 shows two slides from a workshop agenda. The left slide is titled "COMPREHENSION in Grade 1" and "MAKING MEANING" by Claire Colistro. The right slide is titled "AGENDA for the Session" and lists five topics: 1. Introduction- Our role as primary teachers, 2. Comprehension. What does 'learn to read' mean? What should be the main focus of a primary literacy program, 3. Comprehension strategies: Theory, Background. What do 'good readers' do?, 4. Best practices: Environment, Opportunities and Anticipated Structures, and 5. Teacher's role.

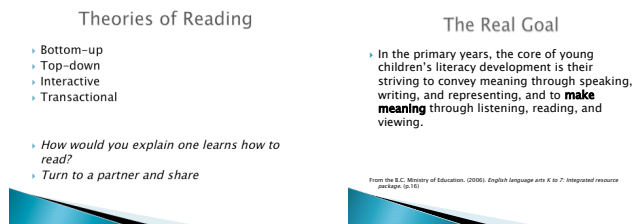
As identified by Pearson and Duke (2002), there is a common misunderstanding among teachers that the major focus of a primary literacy program is to teach students the more procedural skills such as alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness and understanding new vocabulary. For this reason, early in the workshop I will remind teachers that the goal of reading is comprehension, not word identification. I illustrate this point by having teachers read the series of slides, 5, 6 and 7 below in Figure 2, whereby they experience the senselessness of decoding without meaning. Teachers need to understand that while their students are practicing the mechanics, or the 'learn to read' skills, they are also actively thinking, and 'reading to learn'. Audience members read two different examples of text, which will illustrate that the procedural skills in reading become automatic as we become competent, and that reading is first and foremost when one is able to understand, interpret and critique what is read. Without an emphasis on understanding, interpreting and critiquing, teachers miss the mark entirely.

Figure 2. The Importance of Comprehension (Slides 5, 6, and 7)

Figure 2 shows three slides illustrating the importance of comprehension. The first slide, titled "CAN YOU READ THIS?", shows a pair of glasses and a block of gibberish text. The second slide, titled "EASY TO READ... BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?", shows a red question mark and a list of bullet points explaining the rules of cricket. The third slide, titled "EASY TO READ... BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?", shows a diagram of a cricket field and a photo of a cricket match, with the text "Cricket as explained to a foreigner".

I will make connections to the British Columbia English Language Arts IRP document by selecting pertinent excerpts from the document, which illustrate that the Ministry of Education recognizes comprehension as the main goal of reading. I will emphasize, for example, some of the learning outcomes, such as students are expected to set goals, make connections and ask questions, and to reinforce the point that comprehending/interpreting is the all-important focus of literacy learning.

Figure 3. The Real Goal in Reading (Slides 8 and 9)

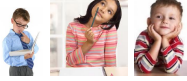


Next, definitions from various sources in the field of education that focus on the integral role of comprehension in learning will be shown, slide 14, and read. I will also share some slides with historical information that describe the impetus for promoting research in this area. For example, I have included Durkin's work (1978), which demonstrated that many schools in the 1970s recognized that a large number of students in Grades 3 to 6 could not comprehend text. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 4 slides 16 and 17, I will briefly discuss the research on what good readers do, which is a central focus in the research literature and how the B.C IRP supports that focus in a few of the guiding principles.

Figure 4. Defining Reading Comprehension (slide 14, 16 and 17)

Comprehension Definition

Cunningham and Allington, say that comprehension is thinking about and responding to what you are reading.



Conclusion: we now understand that the reader is in charge of the process to monitor, control, and advance the search for meaning.

Research Findings

Proficient Readers...

- Set goals.
- **Evaluating** and making **predictions**.
- **Construct, revise and question**.
- Make **connections**
- Focus on what is important.
- Exclude unimportant details.
- **Ask** questions for clarification.

Adapted from Duke & Pearson, 2002. Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension. In Alan E. Farstrup & S. Jay Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp. 205-242). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

IRP's guiding principles;

- Learning requires the active participation of the student.
- People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.
- Learning is both an individual and a group process.
- Learning is most effective when students reflect on the process of learning and set goals for improvement.

The slides below in Figure 5 convey how several researchers have offered many ideas of critical strategies for supporting reading comprehension. The three slides, beginning with slide 20 listing some of the strategies in Roberts and Duke (2010), slide 21, the 7 from Almasi and Hart (2011), and slide 22, Duke, Pearson, Strachen, and Billman (2011) name 10. All three illustrate that there are many ways to aid/teach comprehension in a primary literacy program. Participants in the workshop will be invited to consider the overlap among the researchers' lists of strategies.

Figure 5. Effective Literacy Teachers' Practices (Slides 20 to 22)

Comprehension Strategies (Pt1)

Roberts and Duke (2010) name promising instructional practices for comprehension such as:

- text-structure instruction
- Retelling
- activation and use of prior knowledge
- multiple strategy instruction.

Roberts, K.L. and Duke, N.K. (2010) Comprehension in the elementary grades: The research base. In Kathy Ganske & Douglas Fisher (Eds.), *Comprehension across the curriculum: Perspectives and practices* #12 (pp.21-45). New York, London: Guilford Press.

Comprehension Strategies (Pt2)

Almasi and Hart (2011) state seven strategies that research has shown to be most critical to comprehension:

- 1) predicting
- 2) using background knowledge to make connections
- 3) setting purposes
- 4) visualizing
- 5) identifying text structure
- 6) monitoring comprehension
- 7) summarizing.

Almasi, Janice F. & Hart, Susan J. (2011). Best practices in comprehension instruction. In Lesley Mandel Morrow & Linda B. Gambrell (Eds.), *Best practices in literacy instruction* (pp.150-175). New York: Guilford Press.

Comprehension Strategies (Pt3)

Duke, Pearson, Strachen and Billman (2011) name ten essential elements of effective reading comprehension:

- 1) build disciplinary and world knowledge
- 2) provide exposure to a volume and range of texts
- 3) provide motivating texts and contexts for reading
- 4) teach strategies for comprehending
- 5) teach text structures
- 6) engage students in discussion
- 7) build vocabulary and language knowledge
- 8) integrate reading and writing
- 9) observe and assess
- 10) differentiate instruction.

Duke, N. K., Pearson, P.D., Strachen, S.L. & Billman, A.K. (2011). Essential elements of fostering and teaching reading comprehension. In S. Jay Samuels & A.L. Farstrup (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction 4th edition* (pp. 31-53). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Teachers will be reminded that as educators, we should not see the list of strategies as a checklist to strike off as each lesson is 'taught' and the correct number of strategies have been taught by the end of Grade 1. Teachers need to use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model and make responsive decisions about their learners' needs.

At this part in the workshop, I will focus on the studies of effective literacy teachers' practices, wherein researchers have noted common conditions and practices that develop students' comprehension skills. As shown in Figure 5 below, I focus on opportunities for

students and teachers talking about text; volume of reading by teacher and children; and authenticity of texts and purposes for reading. I will underscore that individual and collective strategies for teaching comprehension of text should be embedded in a balanced literacy program, and that within a literacy program it is critical to incorporate strategies and routines into effective classroom practices. Furthermore, I will highlight a point from an article by Gambrell, Malloy and Mazzoni (2011) that research has shown that no single instructional program, approach, or method has been found to be effective in teaching all students to read (p. 17). Rather than suggesting or implying any prescribed program, teachers will be encouraged to think about key elements found in exemplary literacy classrooms that balance procedural skills and higher-order literacy competencies. Once teachers have an understanding of evidence-based practices, it is hoped that they will be empowered to integrate some of the strategies highlighted in the slides below into their own classroom practice.

The list of 10 evidence-based practices for comprehensive literacy instruction by Gambrell, Malloy and Mazzoni (2011) is a particularly appropriate starting point for teachers on the path to instructing for comprehension because it is a recent list of practices encompassing strategy instruction within the 10. For this reason, these 10 ideas for supporting comprehension will be included in the teacher handout (see Appendix B) at the end of the workshop. During the workshop only a few of the 10 practices will be highlighted and reviewed.

Figure 6. Evidence-Based Teachers' Practices (Slides 29, 30 and 31)

Effective Literacy Teaching

- ▶ The next step is to see how good primary literacy programs "consciously integrate the teaching of skills with authentic literacy experiences" (Hall 2003, p.317).



10 Evidence-Based Practices for a Comprehensive Literacy Program

- ▶ 1. Create a classroom culture that fosters literacy motivation.
- ▶ 2. Teach reading for authentic meaning-making purposes: for pleasure, to be informed, and to perform a task.
- ▶ 3. Provide students with scaffolded instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary fluency, and comprehension to promote independent reading.
- ▶ 4. Give students time for self-selected independent reading.
- ▶ 5. Provide students with high-quality literature across a wide range of genres.

continued...

10 Evidence-Based Practices for a Comprehensive Literacy Program

- ▶ 6. Use multiple texts that build on prior knowledge, link concepts, and expand vocabulary.
- ▶ 7. Build whole-class context that emphasizes community and collaboration.
- ▶ 8. Balance teacher- and students-led discussions of texts.
- ▶ 9. Integrate technologies that link and expand concepts.
- ▶ 10. Differentiate instruction using a variety of instructionally relevant assessments.

(Gambell, Malloy, & Mazzoni 2011, p. 21)

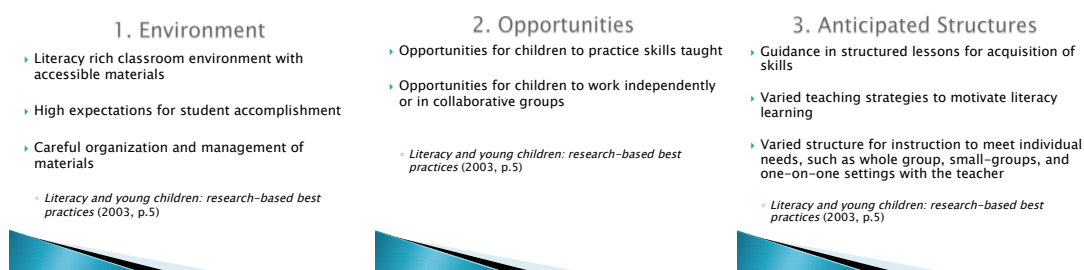
Next, in accordance with the literature review, I will provide teachers with three broad headings to help them make sense of the overwhelming amount of literature on strategies for developing reading comprehension. These three categories, Environment, Opportunities, and Anticipated Structures should help teachers make sense of the contextual conditions and strategies that can enhance literacy programs. As shown in Figure 6 below, the teacher needs to: create a safe environment and provide motivating texts and context for reading, set the stage by having authentic purposes for reading, and support all stages of the process from pre-reading to after-reading activities.

It is within a supportive environment that promotes comprehension and the routine of small-group instruction that teachers build opportunities for differentiating instruction. Teachers set up the environment, establish a routine of reading for understanding and select appropriate strategies for the learning opportunities. As described previously, anticipated structures refers to the regular routine that a teacher establishes, such as moving from a teacher-directed lesson to small groups with selected materials, to pairs with independent reading selections. Another pedagogical routine can include establishing sharing personal experiences, connecting to the text, thinking aloud to monitor comprehension or new vocabulary, and asking questions to ensure the students are predicting and motivated. Group work can follow a structured routine of re-reading

known texts, review of new vocabulary, engaging in word study, interacting around an idea and/or text, and then reading a new text (Reutzel, 2011, p. 420). Opportunity refers to the teachers' design and implementation of activities that support the understanding of the texts being read by the students. These opportunities need to ensure that students understand complex syntactic structures, that they are taught how to draw inferences, and that they are supported in their understanding of abstract language.

No matter how well a particular practice is shown to be effective by research, the optimal learning environment can only be achieved when skillful and dedicated teachers use their professional judgment to make instructional decisions that enable students to achieve their full potential. Providing comprehensive literacy instruction in increasingly diverse classrooms requires teachers to differentiate based on students' needs. Like the researchers, I too will stress that it is the knowledgeable professional teacher, skillfully implementing these routines, opportunities and establishing this environment, who makes the biggest difference.

Figure 7. Environment, Opportunities and Anticipated Structures (slides 35, 36, and 37).



No discussion of reading comprehension evidence-based teaching practices would be complete without the mention of teachers' need to do ongoing observations in order to design appropriate instruction to meet the individual needs of all students. As shown in

Figure 8, the next section of the workshop is on promoting the practice of formally and informally assessing students. A critical assessment tool is observation with a purpose. Observations can be completed with the use of checklists, anecdotal notes and personal reading conferences in which teachers gather particularly helpful information.

Assessing students' oral reading is also important. For example, running records or miscue analysis can illustrate not just how students decode print, but can also inform how they engage prior knowledge, construct meaning and monitor the comprehension process (Clay, 2002). When teachers observe students' oral reading behaviors, they are able to make inferences about students' strengths and needs. They can then plan instruction based on the needs that have been observed and identified during large or small group work. For example, some students may need concentrated instructional support in some areas in order to learn important strategies such as making predictions. Small group and one-on-one configurations can be effective in helping to differentiate instruction for such learners.

On a more global level, teachers need to also assess the overall classroom environment to identify factors that enhance progress, as well as those that inhibit it. For example, how mistakes and off-track responses are dealt with in the classroom, or whether or not an attitude of sharing and recommending books is being nurtured. Decisions about where to go next with children need to be based on assessment results.

Figure 8. The Teacher's Role (Slides 40, 41, and 42)

The figure consists of three slides, each with a blue and black decorative triangle at the bottom left. The first slide is titled 'Teachers, not programs, make the difference' and contains a bullet point: 'In order to reach all children teachers need to be willing to provide instruction that responds to the needs of each child based on frequent assessment results.' The second slide is titled 'Teacher's role in an Effective Primary Literacy Program' and contains two bullet points: 'Assessment **for** learning provides feedback on a regular, ongoing basis.' and 'Assessment **as** learning actively involves students in their own learning process.' The third slide is titled 'Assessment: Final Thoughts' and contains a bullet point: 'A robust classroom literacy program continually provides detailed information about students' current competencies and next steps: it informs our ongoing work in the zone of proximal development.' Below the third slide is a small citation: '(Afferbach, Kim, Crassas & Cho 2011, p.323)'. At the bottom of the second slide is another citation: 'From the B.C. Ministry of Education. (2006). English language arts K to 7: Integrated resource package. (p.95)'

The final section of the workshop (as described below in Figure 9) is allotted to open questions and clarification about the distinguishing characteristics of an exemplary primary literacy program. I hope that it is within the discussion, and after brainstorming suggestions for practical application and implementation in the classroom, that teachers consider making even small but significant changes in their classrooms. An example of my own personal change is to increase text talk; by sharing this with other teachers, I can discuss how one change can benefit in many areas.

Figure 9. Effective Literacy Teachers (Slides 43 and 44).



The workshop is intended to have teachers examine their own pedagogical beliefs in the area of reading instruction. What matters most is that after the workshop, teachers will act on this knowledge, and reflect on how this understanding impacts their literacy instruction. The workshop is a small step in helping some teachers create literacy-rich environments in a balanced language arts program that would be developmentally appropriate, meaningful, interactive and cooperative, as well as independent. It is also hoped that the workshop will contribute to their confidence as they implement some of these literacy practices within their respective classrooms based on an understanding of the rationale behind such strategies.

Chapter 4

Reflections on My Learning

[The child] was teaching me once again a lesson that I seem to have to relearn each year: when given the opportunity, listen to the children. They will show you how they learn best, and often that way is not the teacher's way.

(Gallas, 1991, p. 41)

As I have acquired knowledge from courses or my own reading, I have transformed or reformed generalizations I had about learning, and generated new ones. I came to understand that a good literacy program should include both the code-based skills needed for word recognition and the higher-level language skills needed for comprehension, woven into all aspects of everyday classroom work.

Before starting my Master program, I perceived students as the third circle in a Venn diagram, intersecting with teacher and environment, and having little influence on what was taught, with the teacher controlling both the environment and students' input. The role of the teacher is to provide the environment, opportunities and routines that support that development. This is similar to the experience of watching a child develop speech. I know I did not teach my son how to talk, but simply set up an encouraging environment, and talked aloud to his earliest coos and gurgles. I refined attempts at speech by responding to approximations, "*Did you want the ball? Here's the toy.*" I controlled the environment to support his learning. Similarly, in school, the focus and responsibility of a teacher should be to create an environment that supports learning. As I continue to evolve as a teacher, I see the learner as being in charge of driving inquiry, discovery, and change.

The realization that the learner is the center of the learning was also supported in the zone of proximal development. In the literature review I described how best practices in a primary literacy program have strong foundations in social constructivist theories (Vygotsky, 1978). From birth to age 3, as children are learning to communicate, a child's environment is rich in language and influence from the social interactions in the home and community. Vygotsky (1978) reminds us that verbal language is a sign of thought, and that this thought extends beyond the confines of spoken language. Children talk about new ideas in order to understand and internalize them into their own understanding. Classrooms too need to provide an environment that is rich in text-talk, ensuring ample opportunities for children to learn and practice higher-order thinking skills and activities that ask students to explain, elaborate or defend their ideas.

Early Days in Graduate School

I began the Master of Education program in the Faculty of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria as a mature adult, a veteran teacher, and the mother of three grown children. I struggled through an article the night before my first class of an intense summer course, so that I might participate with some degree of intelligence in the next day's discussion. For the next 21 days and 14 classes, I felt as though I was climbing a 90-degree rock face. The ideas of Vygotsky were new to me, and I had but a vague familiarity of terms such as discourse, pedagogy, and schemata. Rather than feeling like a new graduate student, I felt more like a senior citizen, out of touch with the latest trends in education and worried about looking stupid in a class discussion. It was an epiphany to realize that many Grade 1 students entering my class had felt the same way.

Fortunately, my professor balanced content with structures that supported learning. He modeled how to analyze text so students could move to a newer or more refined level of knowledge and understanding. He encouraged everyone's input and provided daily opportunities for small group discussion. It was hard work, but my years of teaching experience helped me make connections as I read theoretical articles. During group discussion I contributed personal and professional experiences that demonstrated an understanding and connection to the articles, and my classmates helped me to connect my experience to the theories and research, enabling me to refine or re-define my beliefs regarding learning and education. Since each small group discussion was unique, I often engaged with different members of the class whose experiences and knowledge supplemented my own learning. Researching articles about new concepts and theories, then discussing them in class, turned into a routine that fostered learning, rather than dictating any single way of perceiving.

Journey to Understanding Reading Comprehension Pedagogy

I have had children come into my Grade 1 classroom from various backgrounds, experiences and exposure to literacy. In the future I will respond to the diverse children as active learners in the learning process and consider how their backgrounds influence their personal construction of meaning from text. I have learned from the research that highly effective comprehension lessons are cognitively, socially, and pedagogically rich. We need to go beyond teaching separated segmented strategies; rather it is desirable to create classrooms mindful of open-ended activities and opportunities for students to interact around text and with their peers and experienced others.

Concluding Thoughts

My graduate studies marked the beginning of a formal review of my own pedagogy, and I have continued to refine and expanded my ideas ever since. The review of literature has been very influential in my understandings of how to develop comprehension in Grade 1 students. Comprehension in my view is an important topic in education and a testament to this is the publication of the first *Handbook of Research on Reading Comprehension* (2009). The book assembles researchers of reading comprehension from various fields of expertise to document the most recent research on the topic, which cannot help but further influence education, and more research.

My project is the result of my educational journey, in which I refine the role of both teacher and student. Learning to read and write is a complex process. I once believed that educational goals were based on developmental markers or stages of a child's growth and that the elementary school program was just a continuation of those developmental stages. By designing my workshop and putting into practice the principles and strategies outlined in this paper, I hope to become a more responsive and skilled teacher.

Reading without comprehension is not truly reading, a fact that some teachers seem to miss, which led me to design the workshop for teachers that focuses on balancing learning to decode with comprehension, and supports teachers in choosing best practices for their primary program. In my workshop, I encourage teachers to consider creating a literacy-rich environment with opportunities to discuss text similar to those for learning through play and centers for examination and discovery. It is the teacher, not the prescribed program, which makes the biggest difference in an exemplary primary literacy program. Teacher autonomy is important in how the program is set up, but it should include students and teachers talking about text, teachers and children reading frequently,

and authentic purposes and texts for reading. No single program can satisfy all of these requirements, since the key is integration.

Implications for Future Research

My review of literature has been very influential in my understandings of how to develop comprehension in Grade 1 students. I would have appreciated additional descriptive research conducted in classroom settings that would balance the research that compares the success of just one or two comprehension strategies in a controlled setting for a short time period. Additional expert observation of a variety of diverse classrooms might better identify common traits of effectiveness. This data would provide more examples for teachers to model as they consciously establish a learning environment that supports text talk, provides opportunities for students to learn in different ways—including from one another—and ensures that all children are moving forward in their learning.

In my workshop, I encourage teachers to consider creating a literacy-rich environment with opportunities to discuss text similar to those for learning through play and centers for examination and discovery. Teacher autonomy is important in how the program is set up, but it should include students and teachers talking about text, teachers and children reading frequently, and authentic purposes and texts for reading. No single program can satisfy all of these requirements, since the key is integration. How do we support teachers trying to put into practice the principles and strategies outlined in this paper? Perhaps a workshop does not meet the goal to improve comprehension, and instead a teacher inservice or planning together with another teacher would encourage teachers to be responsive to the diverse needs of a class. These other suggestions may

achieve the goal of supporting teachers in aligning pedagogy with intent into their practice.

I would also be interested in research to understand why teachers have not adopted the strategies suggested by the researchers more widely. Such strategies include targeted activation of prior knowledge (which includes text talk), literature webbing, visual imagery training, text-structure instruction and retelling. Incorporating strategy instruction into the daily life of the classroom seems to pose a challenge for teachers. We need to uncover teacher beliefs and assumptions about the learning-to-read process.

Whether we focus on comprehension in a primary program using best practices, or upper grades using intervention to explicitly teach strategies, the caution is to avoid making teaching comprehension strategies a list of lessons. We need to implement a strategy in a way that it becomes part of students' repertoire so they can select and use it when required. It takes lots of modeling and guided practice to get students to this point. As Duke and Pearson (2002) point out, any balanced literacy program must help teachers recognize breakdowns in understanding so they can set about analyzing the breakdown and making instructional changes to improve the situation.

The growing complexity and variability of our schools and classrooms make any recommendations concerning reading comprehension difficult to implement. Just as we are asking students to be strategic in using information valid for a task so to we need to provide education and support around teacher's professional judgment to successfully incorporate any new approach by understanding the reading process.

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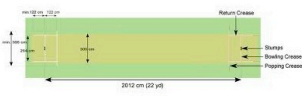

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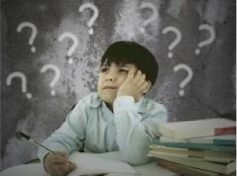
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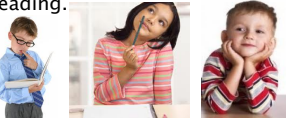
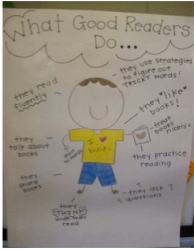
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Appendix A

<p style="text-align: center;">COMPREHENSION in Grade 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MAKING MEANING Claire Colistro</p> 	<p>Slide 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Introduction of speaker • Ask how many years of experience participants have
<p style="text-align: center;">AGENDA for the Session</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction- Our role as primary teachers. 2. Comprehension. What does 'learn to read' mean? What should be the main focus of a primary literacy program. 3. Comprehension strategies: Theory, Background. What do 'good readers' do? 4. Best practices: Environment, Opportunities and Anticipated Structures 5. Teacher's role 	<p>Slide 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the workshop
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>1. INTRODUCTION</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">How old were you when you learned to walk?</p>  	<p>Slide 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did you learned to walk? • Early is not a predictor of beyond mastery
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>2. COMPREHENSION</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Reading is more than decoding The mechanics used when learning to read become automatic and they are rarely called on in our everyday reading.</p>  	<p>Slide 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other skills that become automatic such as driving or following a recipe

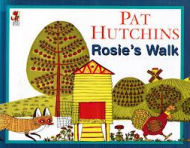

<p>CAN YOU READ THIS? </p> <p>i cduolt blveiee taht l cluod aulaclyt uesdnatnrd waht l was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdnrig to a rscsheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in waht oerdr the lttres in a wrod are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is taht the frsit and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whotuit a pboerlm. Tihis is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Azanmig huh? yaeh and l awlyas tghuhot spleling was ipmorantt! if you can raed tihis forwrad it.</p> <p>http://www.funny-potato.com/read-this.html</p>	<p>Slide 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of a passage that shows that the reader does not need correct spelling to figure out the meaning of the text.
<p>EASY TO READ... BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN? </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You have two sides, one out in the field and one in. Each man that's in the side that's in goes out, and when he's out he comes in and the next man goes in until he's out. When they are all out, the side that's out comes in and the side that's been in goes out and tries to get those coming in, out. Sometimes you get men still in and not out. ▶ When a man goes out to go in, the men who are out try to get him out, and when he is out he goes in and the next man in goes out and goes in. There are two men called umpires who stay out all the time and they decide when the men who are in are out. When both sides have been in and all the men have been out, and both sides have been out twice after all the men have been in, including those who are not out, that is the end of the game 	<p>Slide 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 2 is the opposite, with simple easy to read words demonstrating that reading is all about seeking meaning
<p>EASY TO READ... BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?</p> <p>"Cricket as explained to a foreigner"</p>  	<p>Slide 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context for the previous reading passage helps us to make sense of what is read
<p>Theories of Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Bottom-up ▶ Top-down ▶ Interactive ▶ Transactional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>How would you explain one learns how to read?</i> ▶ <i>Turn to a partner and share</i> 	<p>Slide 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of the 4 theories of reading • Ask them how they think one learns to read. Can share it with a partner rather than whole group • Encourage them to think how they would approach teaching students to read



<p style="text-align: center;">The Real Goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In the primary years, the core of young children’s literacy development is their striving to convey meaning through speaking, writing, and representing, and to make meaning through listening, reading, and viewing. <p style="font-size: small;"><i>From the B.C. Ministry of Education. (2006). English language arts K to 7: Integrated resource package. (p.16)</i></p>	<p>Slide 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring in how the B.C Language Arts curriculum looks at teaching students to learn to read
<p style="text-align: center;">Missing the Mark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ By second grade many children have not learned to decode and comprehend simultaneously. They cannot wield comprehension processes enjoyably and profitably even if their decoding skills are on grade level. 	<p>Slide 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some findings about the importance of focusing on comprehension * See the continuation on the next slide
<p style="text-align: center;">Missing the Mark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If these students cannot comprehend well after three years of instruction, continuing the same instruction will not likely raise their reading abilities to grade level, even if their decoding skills are on grade level. <p style="font-size: small;"><i>Block Gambrell & Pressley 2002. (p. 54). Improving comprehension instruction: rethinking research, theory and classroom practices</i></p>	<p>Slide 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the need to read for understanding in upper elementary and beyond. Example of Durkin’s study for Science and Social studies classes
<p><u>3. COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES:</u> Theory and Background</p> <p>Question: What is reading comprehension?</p> <p>Why does one read?</p> 	<p>Slide 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on Durkin, U.S. study Preventing Reading Difficulties (PRD) and the follow up to the PRD, Pearson & Duke (2002)





<h3>Classroom Vignette</h3> <p><i>"During a classroom's self-selected reading time the teacher listens in on a boy reading a book aloud. She is impressed as she says to him 'Wow! That's a very hard book and you were reading it with almost no mistakes.' However, when she asks the boy to tell her about the story he can't because as he responds, 'I wasn't really listening.'" (Roberts & Duke, 2010, p. 23)</i></p> 	<h3>Slide 13</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the story on the slide • Discuss other examples of reading but 'not really listening'
<h3>Comprehension Definition</h3> <p>Cunningham and Allington (2007) that comprehension is thinking about & responding to what you are reading.</p>  <p>► Conclusion: we now understand that the reader is in charge of the process to monitor, control, and advance the search for meaning.</p>	<h3>Slide 14</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If children are taught to read with texts written only in decodable words such as 'Cam has a tan cat' ..."they will not learn that thinking is the real goal." Also from Cunningham & Allington (2007) • Other definitions offered such as Sweet's from the IRP and RAND
<h3>Research on Comprehension</h3> <p>► What do 'good readers' do? What works?</p> 	<h3>Slide 15</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We took for granted that students were 'listening' to the text as they were learning to read hence became proficient
<h3>Research Findings</h3> <p>► Proficient Readers...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Set goals. ◦ <i>Evaluating and making predictions.</i> ◦ <i>Construct, revise and question.</i> ◦ Make <i>connections</i> ◦ <i>Focus</i> on what is important. ◦ <i>Exclude</i> unimportant details. ◦ <i>Ask</i> questions for clarification. <p>► Adapted from Duke & Pearson, 2002, Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension. In Alan E. Farstrup & S. Jay Samuels (Eds.), <i>What research has to say about reading instruction</i> (pp. 205-242). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.</p>	<h3>Slide 16</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research began with finding out how good readers approach text. • Some of the skills that good readers employed






<p>IRP's guiding principles;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ • Learning requires the active participation of the student. ▶ • People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates. ▶ • Learning is both an individual and a group process. ▶ • Learning is most effective when students reflect on the process of learning and set goals for improvement. 	<p>Slide 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding principles from the IRP bring in the interactive and transactional theories of reading • Also metacognitive strategies
<p>Group Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ List some comprehension strategies ▶ Put them in your own words ▶ Do a gallery walk to share and clarify everyone's list. 	<p>Slide 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the teachers to offer what they think good readers do to understand text • Which strategies do you promote in the class. • Small group on chart paper
<p>Making Meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What strategies did research identify as important? ▶ Review what has been found as important skills needed when 'reading to learn'. 	<p>Slide 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to explicitly teach comprehension strategies • Research also finds that reading comprehension is a complicated task
<p>Comprehension Strategies (Pt1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Roberts and Duke (2010) name promising instructional practices for comprehension such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ text-structure instruction ◦ retelling ◦ activation and use of prior knowledge ◦ multiple strategy instruction. <p><small>▶ Roberts, K.L. and Duke, N.K. (2010). Comprehension in the elementary grades: The research base. In Kathy Ganske & Douglas Fisher (Eds.), <i>Comprehension across the curriculum: Perspectives and practices K-12</i> (pp.23-45). New York: N.Y: Guilford Press.</small></p> 	<p>Slide 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 1 with lots of suggestions for strategies and elements • From the 2002 suggestions that I sum up as '12, 5 and 4'. • Refer to the chart their paper





<h3>Comprehension Strategies (Pt2)</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Almasi and Hart (2011) state seven strategies that research has shown to be most critical to comprehension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1) predicting ◦ 2) using background knowledge to make connections ◦ 3) setting purposes ◦ 4) visualizing ◦ 5) identifying text structure ◦ 6) monitoring comprehension ◦ 7) summarizing. <p><small>▶ Almasi, Janice F. & Hart, Susan J. (2011). Best practices in comprehension instruction. In Lesley Mandel Morrow & Linda B. Gambrell (Eds.), <i>Best practices in literacy instruction</i> (pp.250-275). New York: Guilford Press.</small></p>	<p>Slide 21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 2 reduces it 7
<h3>Comprehension Strategies (Pt3)</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Duke, Pearson, Strachen and Billman (2011) name ten essential elements of effective reading comprehension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 1) build disciplinary and world knowledge ◦ 2) provide exposure to a volume and range of texts ◦ 3) provide motivating texts and contexts for reading ◦ 4) teach strategies for comprehending ◦ 5) teach text structures ◦ 6) engage students in discussion ◦ 7) build vocabulary and language knowledge ◦ 8) integrate reading and writing ◦ 9) observe and assess ◦ 10) differentiate instruction. <p><small>▶ Duke, N. K., Pearson, P.D., Strachen, S.L. & Billman, A.K. (2011). Essential elements of fostering and teaching reading comprehension. In S. Jay Samuels & A.E. Farstrup (Eds.), <i>What research has to say about reading instruction 4th edition</i> (pp. 51-93). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.</small></p>	<p>Slide 22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 3 • All recent information • Of the 10 not all are strategies to explicitly teach
<h3>Comprehension Strategies</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What are one or two of the overlapping strategies across all three researchers' lists? ▶ Our HIGHLIGHTS: 	<p>Slide 23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I suggest that these were daunting to me • What did they notice as overlapping or similar ideas • What would you say were the important ones to focus on?
<h3>Learn to Read & Read to Learn</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In a primary literacy program teachers need to support the development of both form and function. 	<p>Slide 24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Keep your eye on the ball' reminds me to stay focused to the primary goal of a good grade one literacy program • The many different aspects of a Primary program • The role of a primary program

<p>Learn to Read & Read to Learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Form</i> explicit skills, such as phonics and sight vocabulary ▶ <i>Function</i> comprehension, purpose, and meaning <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: #00a0c0; color: white; padding: 5px 10px; border-radius: 5px;">Form</div> <div style="background-color: #00a0c0; color: white; padding: 5px 10px; border-radius: 5px;">Function</div> </div>	<p>Slide 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that there are learn to read skills that are taught in grade one • Never lose sight of the transactional aspect of reading
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>4. BEST PRACTICES</u> Learn to Read & Read to Learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Researchers argue that along with phonics and word identification there should be an equal emphasis on vocabulary and text talk (Pearson & Duke 2002) <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>	<p>Slide 26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point is on the slide • Example of a story with lots of ideas to discuss and interpret with very little text • Supports the interactive theory but can still include aspects of a bottom-up theory
<p><u>4. BEST PRACTICES</u> Learn to Read & Read to Learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Even when there are lessons on isolated skills, such as spelling and phonics instruction, the lessons did not overshadow holistic activities, such as a guided reading lesson. (Pressley 2002) 	<p>Slide 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therefore the main focus is on meaning, though we know that we have other skills to teach
<p>Balancing the Two</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ On the one hand, [teachers] provide extensive opportunities for their pupils to read and respond to children's literature and to write for a variety of purposes. ▶ On the other hand, they attend to the codes of written language, sound-symbol correspondence, word recognition and more. <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">(Hall, 2003, p. 316)</p>	<p>Slide 28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The balance in the IRP of the amount of time suggested • Provide examples of the IRP learning outcomes that suggest more weight on thinking and responding

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Effective Literacy Teaching</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The next step is to see how good primary literacy programs “consciously integrate the teaching of skills with authentic literacy experiences” (Hall, 2003, p.317). 	<p>Slide 29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we get that balance in our classrooms?
<h2 style="text-align: center;">10 Evidence-Based Practices for a Comprehensive Literacy Program</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1. Create a classroom culture that fosters literacy motivation. ▶ 2. Teach reading for authentic meaning-making purposes; for pleasure, to be informed, and to perform a task. ▶ 3. Provide students with scaffolded instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary fluency, and comprehension to promote independent reading. ▶ 4. Give students time for self-selected independent reading. ▶ 5. Provide students with high-quality literature across a wide range of genres. <p style="text-align: center;">continued...</p>	<p>Slide 30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This list of 10 is included in the handout at the end • Review the first five to check for understanding and offer examples.
<h2 style="text-align: center;">10 Evidence-Based Practices for a Comprehensive Literacy Program</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 6. Use multiple texts that build on prior knowledge, link concepts, and expand vocabulary. ▶ 7. Build whole-class context that emphasizes community and collaboration. ▶ 8. Balance teacher- and student-led discussions of texts. ▶ 9. Integrate technologies that link and expand concepts. ▶ 10. Differentiate instruction using a variety of instructionally relevant assessments. <p style="font-size: small;">(Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2011, p. 21)</p>	<p>Slide 31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the last five to check for understanding and offer examples.
<h2 style="text-align: center;">What to do?</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Research has shown that no single instructional program, approach, or method has been found to be effective in teaching all students to read.  <p style="font-size: small;">Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2011 p. 17</p>	<p>Slide 32</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just as no two people are alike so too teachers are the same. Each makes the class their own • Reflection of the philosophy of learning and reading

<p>Teachers, <i>not</i> programs, make the difference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Teachers' understanding and beliefs about literacy learning and learning in general do indeed have an impact on classrooms. ▶ From Miriam P. Trehearne. Language Arts: grades 1-2 Teacher's resource book p.5 	<p>Slide 33</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We influence attitudes • Emphasize the positive in fostering curiosity and life long learners
<p>Three Key Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1- Environment ▶ 2- Opportunities ▶ 3- Anticipated Structures 	<p>Slide 34</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why these headings were created. • The process that from the many suggestions. • How I organized the elements and strategies
<p>1. Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Literacy rich classroom environment with accessible materials ▶ High expectations for student accomplishment ▶ Careful organization and management of materials ◦ <i>Literacy and young children: research-based best practices</i> (2003, p.5) 	<p>Slide 35</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping the many suggestions that have to do with environment • A teacher sets the tone
<p>2. Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Opportunities for children to practice skills taught ▶ Opportunities for children to work independently or in collaborative groups ◦ <i>Literacy and young children: research-based best practices</i> (2003, p.5) 	<p>Slide 36</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time was a major concern identified • Time with text and time with talk • Zone of proximal development and gradual release of responsibility both require time and opportunity

<h3>3. Anticipated Structures</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Guidance in structured lessons for acquisition of skills ▶ Varied teaching strategies to motivate literacy learning ▶ Varied structure for instruction to meet individual needs, such as whole group, small-groups, and one-on-one settings with the teacher <p>◦ <i>Literacy and young children: research-based best practices</i> (2003, p.5)</p> 	<p>Slide 37</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling and scaffolding that support different learners • Encouraging readers to be strategic
<h3>It's all about the Teacher</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The teacher creates a safe environment and provides opportunities for learning through modeling and explicit instruction. The reading routine has students using authentic texts and involved in the whole reading process. <p><small>(Almasi & Hart 2011, Duke, Pearson, Strachen & Billman 2011)</small></p> 	<p>Slide 38</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary • Towards an exemplary literacy program
<h3>It's all about the Teacher</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It is teachers who make crucial decisions about what each student needs to become a successful literacy learner.  	<p>Slide 39</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension, we do not want to repeat the Durkin study. • We assess by observing the learner and changing the instruction
<p>Teachers, <i>not</i> programs, make the difference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In order to reach all children teachers need to be willing to provide instruction that responds to the needs of each child based on frequent assessment results. 	<p>Slide 40</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn in different ways • On-going assessment • Students learn by doing

<p>Teacher's role in an Effective Primary Literacy Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assessment <i>for</i> learning provides feedback on a regular, ongoing basis. ▶ Assessment <i>as</i> learning actively involves students in their own learning process. <p><small>From the B.C. Ministry of Education. (2006). English language arts K to 7: Integrated resource package. (p.95)</small></p> 	<p>Slide 41</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the IRP • Point out how there are many suggestions for each learning outcome
<p>Teacher's role: Final Thoughts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A robust classroom literacy program continually provides detailed information about students' current competencies and next steps: it informs our ongoing work in the zone of proximal development. <p><small>(Afflerbach, Kim, Crassas & Cho 2011, p.323)</small></p> 	<p>Slide 42</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary
<p>Effective Literacy Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Questions ▶ Discussion 	<p>Slide 43</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an opportunity for questions • Ready with some situations that grade one teachers regularly encounter
<p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Curricular ▶ Organizational ▶ Pedagogical 	<p>Slide 44</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout that includes Hall's elements grouped under the 3 headings

Appendix B

Teacher Handout for Making Meaning Workshop**Comprehension Strategies**

Roberts and Duke (2010) name promising instructional practices:

- text-structure instruction
- Retelling
- activation and use of prior knowledge
- multiple strategy instruction.

Roberts, K.L. and Duke, N.K. (2010) Comprehension in the elementary grades: The research base. In Kathy Ganske & Douglas Fisher (Eds.), *Comprehension across the curriculum: Perspectives and practices K-12* (pp.23-45). New York; London: Guilford Press.

Almasi and Hart (2011) state 7 strategies research has shown to be most critical:

- 1) predicting
- 2) using background knowledge to make connections
- 3) setting purposes
- 4) visualizing
- 5) identifying text structure
- 6) monitoring comprehension
- 7) summarizing.

Almasi, Janice F. & Hart, Susan J. (2011). Best practices in comprehension instruction. In Lesley Mandel Morrow & Linda B. Gambrell (Eds.) *Best practices in literacy instruction* (pp.250-275). New York: Guilford Press.

Duke, Pearson, Strachen and Billman (2011) name 10 essential elements:

- 1) build disciplinary and world knowledge
- 2) provide exposure to a volume and range of texts
- 3) provide motivating texts and contexts for reading
- 4) teach strategies for comprehending
- 5) teach text structures
- 6) engage students in discussion
- 7) build vocabulary and language knowledge
- 8) integrate reading and writing
- 9) observe and assess
- 10) differentiate instruction.

Duke, N. K., Pearson, P.D., Strachen, S.L. & Billman, A.K. (2011). Essential elements of fostering and teaching reading comprehension. In S. Jay Samuels & A.E. Farstrup (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction 4th edition* (pp. 51-93). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Best Practices in Literacy Instruction

Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzone (2011) list ten evidence-based practices for comprehensive literacy instruction.

1. Create a classroom culture that fosters literacy motivation.
2. Teach reading for authentic meaning-making purposes; for pleasure, to be informed, and to perform a task.
3. Provide students with scaffolded instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary fluency, and comprehension to promote independent reading.
4. Give students time for self-selected independent reading.
5. Provide students with high-quality literature across a wide range of genres.
6. Use multiple texts that build on prior knowledge, link concepts, and expand vocabulary.
7. Build whole-class context that emphasizes community and collaboration.
8. Balance teacher- and students-led discussions of texts.
9. Integrate technologies that link and expand concepts.
10. Differentiate instruction using a variety of instructionally relevant assessments.

Gambrell, L.B., Malloy, J.A., Janice F., and Mazzone, S.A. (2011). Evidenced-based best practices in comprehensive literacy instruction. In Lesley Mandel Morrow, Linda B. Gambrell (Eds.), *Best practices in literacy instruction* (pp.11-36). New York: Guilford Press.