CHAPTER 3
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It's All About Scaffolding

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Why is the gradual release of responsibility an important pedagogical understanding for teaching reading comprehension?
- How does each instructional context allow for the gradual release of responsibility to students?
- How does utilizing the four instructional contexts provide students with the opportunities to read texts along a wide band of complexity every day?
- What are the functions of each instructional context?

Reading comprehension is never really mastered. There is always a text that stretches our meaning-making capabilities. As adults, our comprehension is often taxed when reading material is conceptually dense or addresses a topic that we know little about. A narrative might be difficult to understand if it doesn't follow a linear time sequence and jumps between different time periods. As adults, we often choose to join a study group or a book club to stretch our comprehension of texts or to expand our reading diet and perspectives. For example, many people who wish to gain a deeper understanding of their religion join a Koran, Talmud, or Bible study group. Participating in a teacher book club to discuss this book with your peers will yield more professional transformation than reading it alone on the beach, although that method is not without merit. Reading one of Oprah's popular book club selections guarantees that you will have opportunities for social interaction on compelling social issues.

The CCSS (NGA & CCSSO, 2010) call for students of all ages to read a wide range of complex texts. Often these challenging texts are beyond the reading

abilities of many children in the classroom. Due to both the variety of text types and the range of text readability, the role of instructional support is important in developing increasingly sophisticated reading comprehension. Often as we work in schools, we hear teachers discussing the challenge of navigating the tension between providing children with opportunities to be independent problem solvers as opposed to exposing children to the complex texts that require a great deal of teacher support. These two seemingly contradictory positions leave teachers feeling torn and unsure of how to do what is best for their students. Finally, teachers struggle with doing it all within the time constraints of a school day.

Applying the Gradual Release of Responsibility

The gradual release of responsibility (GRR; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) is an instructional tool that provides a continuum of support, with the teachers assuming responsibility for the task on one side and the students assuming the responsibility on the other side of the continuum (see Figure 3.1). There is evidence that this tool works well for comprehension instruction due to the complexity and multidimensional nature of comprehension processes. The GRR is related to the Vygotskian (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), defined as the distance between what a learner can do alone and what the learner can do with assistance. Initially, high levels of support are provided by a more knowledgeable other and over time the learner assumes increased responsibility for the task as he or she internalizes the language and behaviors associated with the task.

Task	Share of Responsibility for the Task				
Explicit Instruction					
Modeling					
Collaborative Use					
Guided Practice					
Independent Application					

☐ Students   ☐ Teachers

FIGURE 3.1. The gradual release of responsibility. Based on Duke and Pearson (2002), Pearson and Gallagher (1983), and Shanahan et al. (2010, p. 15).

The term *scaffolding* has been used to describe the instruction because it provides a temporary support system during the child's construction of knowledge. The GRR typically addresses four broad task categories that occur during this construction process: (1) I do it, (2) We do it together, (3) You (multiple students) do it together, and (4) You (single student) do it independently. In something as complex as comprehension, it is likely that children might be in different stages of this process depending on the type of text or task. By incorporating a range of instructional contexts that vary by level of teacher support throughout a school day, it is possible for children to successfully read texts that span a wide range of readability (see Table 3.1).

The Role of Scaffolding
in Instructional Organization

When planning instruction, we need to intentionally balance the type and amount of teacher support provided during literacy instruction. This balance can be built into the daily schedule of activities (see Figure 3.2 and Appendices 3.1–3.3 at the end of the chapter). The schedule enables children to have opportunities each day for reading easy texts of their choosing, being held accountable for precise reading of books at their instructional level, and exposure to texts that stretch their minds. In this chapter we provide a detailed description of the different levels of scaffolding that occur in reading during the course of a literacy block. How to support children's written responses to reading are described in Chapter 7.

It is important to notice that the schedule in Figure 3.2 allocates a distinct 30 minutes of explicit instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, and high-frequency words that we refer to collectively as foundational skills (CCSS), phonics, or word study. Ideally, differentiation by developmental level as identified by a spelling inventory or phonics inventory occurs during the word study time

TABLE 3.1. Literacy Instructional Contexts Providing Most to Least Support

Reading	Responsibility	Writing
Teacher read-aloud	Teacher assumes responsibility with student participation.	Collaborative writing language experience (teacher holds the pen)
Shared reading	Responsibility is shared.	Interactive writing (teacher and child share the pen)
Guided reading	Child assumes responsibility with teacher support.	Guided writing (child holds the pen)
Individual reading	Child assumes responsibility and accountability.	Individual writing (child holds the pen)

	Time	Grouping	Text
Teacher read-aloud	15–30 minutes	Whole-class, heterogeneous	Complex text
Shared reading and writing	45 minutes	Whole-class, heterogeneous	Complex text
Guided reading and independent reading/writing	60 minutes	Small-group, differentiated	Instructional-level text
Word study—spelling/phonics	15–30 minutes	Differentiated	Ability-level activities

FIGURE 3.2. A primary classroom schedule.

block. It is imperative that children at this developmental stage receive explicit, systematic instruction in these skills (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). While these foundational skills must be mastered, they should not dominate the literacy block. Reading comprehension skills (and written and spoken responses to reflect comprehension) are more complex and require more time for instruction and practice than constrained skills. The CCSS K–2 standards reflect this comprehension emphasis. During word study children might read decodable texts that provide concentrated practice in specific words and patterns that have been taught. However, decodable texts are not appropriate for the instructional time blocks described below, including guided reading where children are expected to transfer decoding skills and orchestrate all reading processes with more natural, authentic text.

The Teacher Read-Aloud

The teacher read-aloud serves multiple key instructional functions in the early childhood classroom. Particularly for young children with limited word-recognition abilities, the teacher read-aloud is among the most important instructional time periods of the school day. In years gone by, some of us may remember being in darkened classrooms with children's heads on desks and many eyes closed during the teacher read-aloud. Teachers may have viewed it as a time of the day for "relaxing" with a good book or as a classroom management technique, useful for calming children after recess or lunch. Hopefully, teachers now recognize that read-aloud time is one of the best opportunities for nurturing comprehension skills in developmentally appropriate ways. The questions in the text box on the next page will enable you to do a self-check on the status of your current read-aloud practices and provide some ideas for setting goals for enhancing your current read-aloud procedures.

The teacher read-aloud is at the top of the GRR staircase because the teacher assumes the greatest share of responsibility for the activity. It is most commonly

READ-ALOUD TEACHER CHECK

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- Are read-alouds supporting instructional themes?
- Are the books being read and reread in large- and small-group settings?
- Are the books later accessible to the students for personal reading?
- Do children have choice reading time daily?
- Do discussions include open-ended questions and questions that address characters' motivations, the relationship of plot sequences, and vocabulary development?
- Are strings of follow-up questions asked that provide the bridges that young children need to arrive at high levels of thinking?
- Is an implicit management style being used to increase time on task?

Note. Based on Dickinson, McCabe, and Anastasopoulos (2003).

conducted in a whole-class setting with challenging texts. However, in prekindergarten and kindergarten, time should also be allocated for small-group teacher read-alouds to support language development.

Building a Literacy Community

Bringing the whole class together around a common read-aloud text creates a literacy community. Many books are literary classics that all children at a particular developmental stage should be exposed to with discussion. Some books serve as anchors for literary or disciplinary units. These books should be read and discussed as a whole class during the read-aloud, so they might be referenced throughout the unit in classroom discussions. This is a setting for building engagement, excitement, and common knowledge surrounding the disciplinary content units. As classroom teachers we have an obligation to teach certain topics and to expand students' interests, knowledge, tastes, and beliefs. These texts often serve as introductions to well-known authors and book series, or as springboards for students to pursue further individual study or reading. The heterogeneity of the group is an asset as children share wide-ranging responses in the teacher-led instruction and discussion.

Introducing Challenging Texts

The teacher read-aloud is an ideal setting for introducing texts that may pose challenges for young children either in readability level, conceptual difficulty, or both. It is also the setting for introducing compelling, controversial, and sensitive topics that yield high-level discussion and critical thinking.

Young children are able to discuss and learn from texts that may be far too difficult for them to read independently. Books that have rich themes, sophisticated vocabulary, and new concepts are best introduced in a setting that provides strong teacher support. Books with enough grist for building new knowledge or exploring the depth of the human experience are often beyond the readability of the emergent or novice reader. Therefore, high-level comprehension instruction needs to occur during the teacher read-aloud.

Beautiful informational texts open the doors to building knowledge from text at a young age. Contemporary children's literature addresses the common human experiences of divorce, death, bullying, and physical disabilities. Children should be exposed to these topics under the guidance of a teacher who is able to serve as expert discussion leader, sensitive to the nuances of the children's responses. Children need to begin thinking critically about text and relating to the human experience in literary text at a young age so they know that those are among the purposes and the gifts of reading.

Instruction of Complex Thinking Processes

In order for children to apply higher-level thought processes such as inference, evaluation, and critique, texts must have compelling ideas. Children's initial responses to text may be at explicit levels. Or they may not even understand the explicit information stated in a text and be unaware that they missed key ideas. The read-aloud is the context for gathering all children together to present the explicit introductory strategy lessons. Teaching children to monitor their own comprehension, overcome meaning-making hurdles, and to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and think critically about text requires repeated exposures of explicit instruction, teacher modeling, deep questioning, and sensitive prompting. The extensiveness of this process means that there are not enough hours in the school day to do this repetitively during individual conferences or small-group instruction. It must initially occur with rich text in a whole-class setting. Then follow-up of student application occurs in *both* small-group and individual settings.

Types of Read-Alouds

Not all teacher read-alouds are created equal. Research has determined that certain styles of reading or reader characteristics have been more or less effective in accomplishing particular aims. Additionally, some researchers have developed, studied, and refined particular read-aloud protocols to yield particular outcomes such as conceptual vocabulary development, language development, comprehension, or content knowledge acquisition. These protocols are particularly useful since the new CCSS bring high-level thinking and complex text to the forefront in the primary grades.

Dialogic Reading

Dialogic reading (Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003) is a form of picture book read-aloud that is similar to a conversational read-aloud conducted by many parents of young children.

Protocols have been developed for reading to children as young as 2–3 years old, and more sophisticated protocols have been designed for children from 4 to 5 years of age. Our discussion will be limited to the latter. These protocols are based on the premise that guided practice in using language, specific feedback regarding language use, and scaffolded adult–child interactions around picture book read-alouds facilitate the language development of young children. Using these protocols results in greater language development than when adults simply read a book aloud to young children. Research has demonstrated that these techniques enhance language development for upper- and middle-SES children, but that they most strongly influence the language skills of low-SES children. Dialogic reading increases expressive and receptive vocabulary, the length of utterances, linguistic complexity of spontaneous child verbalizations, and print concept awareness.

It is important to note that, as with any protocol, the degree of effectiveness is directly related to fidelity to the protocol. Dialogic reading should be conducted for 10–15 minutes daily in small groups of no more than five children so that engagement can be maximized. Children of linguistic diversity are likely to get greater benefits if there are opportunities for them to engage with an adult in a one-on-one setting. Whitehurst and colleagues (1994) found that the strongest results can be achieved when parents are also trained using videos to conduct dialogic reading at home, so that children are participating in dialogic reading both at home and at school. Video training was more effective than asking parents to attend a single training session conducted by a teacher or some other form of "live" training. Providing parents with videos (or DVDs) enabled them to repeatedly view many models of adults and children engaging in the read-aloud procedure.

The dialogic reading protocol for children ages 4 and 5 years old centers on asking particular types of questions, evaluating student responses, supporting the children in expanding and refining their responses, and then having the children repeat those refinements or elaborations. Its purposes and procedures are highlighted in the text box on the next page. PEER is an acronym that provides a reminder of the goals of the read-aloud (prompt, evaluate, expand, and repeat). CROWD is an acronym used to help adults remember the types of questioning prompts that should be used during the read-aloud (completion, recall, open-ended, *Wh-*, and distancing).

Neuman (1996) determined that different types of texts yielded different types and amounts of talk. So you should strive for a balance of predictable text, narratives, and informational texts to provide variety and to stretch children's responses.

As with all read-alouds, it is important to remember that the dialogic read-aloud should be enjoyable and well paced, and that every page need not be

DIALOGIC READING PROTOCOL

Dialogic reading is an adult read-aloud protocol that was designed to promote language development for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. It is most effective when conducted individually or in small groups.

Purposes

Increase expressive and receptive vocabulary, expand the length and linguistic complexity of children's responses to texts.

Overview: PEER

- *Prompt* the child to discuss the story, ask questions to encourage further discussion.
- *Evaluate* the child's responses. Use praise generously and reference specific behaviors. Use discussion to refine labels or to scaffold misunderstandings or misrepresentations of the text.
- *Expand* the child's comments through repetition and elaboration.
- *Repeat* by shaping the conversation so that the child has the opportunity to repeat the refinements and elaborations without making the dialogue slow or forced.

Prompts to Facilitate Rich Dialogue: CROWD

- *Completion* prompts: fill-in-the-blank statements or questions (e.g., "The three fruits on this page are _____").
- *Recall* prompts: recalling what has been read (e.g., "Can you remember some places where Spot's mother looked for him?").
- *Open-ended* prompts: require the child to generate his or her own words and structure to tell something about the book (e.g., "Tell me what has happened so far in the story").
- *Wh-* prompts: *what, where*, and *why* questions (e.g., "What is the name for this animal?" "Why do you think Sally is hiding?").
- *Distancing* prompts: questions that require the child to connect the events of the book to life outside the book ("Tell me about a snowy day that you remember").

Note. Based on Whitehurst et al. (1994).

discussed. Your purpose should be to enrich the children's experience with the book, not exhaust all possibilities. Comprehension and vocabulary development can only happen if the children are engaged. If they have tuned out because the discussion has dragged on too long and the dialogue has become a teacher mono-logue, the lesson is over. Monitor the energy and engagement of the children and adjust accordingly.

Performance Reading

In a study of preschools, Tabors, Snow, and Dickinson (2001) found that one of the most effective styles of teacher read-aloud was what they referred to as the *performance approach*. Unlike the dialogic approach, these teachers did minimal talking during their animated, energetic reading of the text. Teachers applying the performance approach made the picture books come to life through the use of pitch, volume, pacing, characters' voices, and facial expressions. Some unfamil-iar vocabulary was briefly defined and children might be asked to predict what would come next during reading. However, extensive discussion occurred after reading, when the children were asked to recall, analyze, and evaluate the text. These effective teachers used an *implicit management* style. Rather than constant reminders to pay attention, raise hands, and follow class rules, these teachers used eye contact, dramatic reading, questioning, and conversational devices to hold the students' attention. As a result, these preschool children sustained their focus on the story and successfully participated in thoughtful discussions. Such discussions address characters' motivations, describe how story events are linked, and analyze the meanings of words. Another important characteristic of effective discussions is the use of follow-up questions in response to the children—questions that yield multiple, connected conversational turns that progress to higher levels of thinking. These features of the performance, along with using the sheltered ESL techniques described in Chapter 2, make this style of read-aloud a good fit for English learners.

Text Talk

Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2001) is a teacher read-aloud procedure with a strong research validation for English-speaking children in kindergarten through second grade. The protocol ensures that children are making sense of the language of texts and expanding their vocabulary. Due to the reliance on using language to construct the meaning, we do not recommend using this complete protocol for English learners who may not have the language skills necessary to understand the text.

　　Text Talk calls for you to ask high-level questions and to explicitly teach sophisticated vocabulary. The text box on the next page describes the procedure for planning a Text Talk lesson. One of the unique features of this read-aloud is the

TEXT TALK READ-ALOUD

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Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2001) is a structured teacher read-aloud that was designed to promote comprehension and language development for students in kindergarten through second grade. It is used with texts that are rich in language and content.

Purposes

Enhance comprehension; develop vocabulary and language; provide a bridge to decontextualized language.

Procedure

1. Select an intellectually challenging text.
2. Provide a *targeted* prereading discussion to activate prior knowledge.
3. Ask open-ended questions during text reading. Provide follow-up questions to the children's responses to achieve deeper processing and higher levels of thinking. Ask a few open-ended general questions at the conclusion of the book.
4. Pictures. In general, pictures are presented after the children have heard and responded to the particular page of text. Children need to be prepared for this change in procedure.
5. Vocabulary is explicitly taught after reading. Three to eight vocabulary words are selected from the text. Children should know the concept or meaning of the word, but not this particular word as typically used by a sophisticated language user (e.g., *amber, bellow, stroll*). Words should be high-utility words so that multiple exposures are possible during the upcoming weeks. Words chosen are *not* disciplinary-specific words that require conceptual development. Children repeat the word. The teacher rereads or discusses the word's use in the book. The word is defined for the children. The teacher provides a few examples of word use in other contexts. The children are invited to use the word in a sentence. The vocabulary is put on an incentive chart that records the use of the words by the children in speaking or writing during the next week (Word Wizard).
6. This type of read-aloud is likely to be used two or three times a week.

display of illustrations following the reading or discussion of each page rather than while the page is being read. This format requires the listeners to pay attention to decontextualized language. Decontextualized language describes things that can't presently be seen, heard, or experienced. Many children will develop this ability through language experiences in the home when families share personal narratives around the dinner table, recount the events of their day, or exchange family stories. However, research evidence indicates that there are differences by income

group in the amount of decontextualized talk that occurs in homes (Hart & Risley, 1995). Children in advantaged homes (in this case, children of college professors) had greater opportunities, with parental scaffolding, to develop extended narratives. Children in low-income families heard fewer words spoken to them and fewer elaborative sentences. Most of the talk was essential talk around the daily functions of life as they were happening. Therefore, read-aloud experiences that provide opportunities for interpreting and applying decontextualized language are essential in the early childhood classroom as a prerequisite to reading comprehension.

Elaborated vocabulary instruction occurs after reading. Beck and McKeown (2001) recommend that you select between three to eight words from the text. They categorize the words to be selected as Tier Two words. Children should be familiar with the concepts represented by these words in their L1 or English, but do not know the actual words that represent the specific concepts. For example, they know what it means to tell someone they're sorry, but they may be unfamiliar with the word *apologize*. The teacher models the pronunciation of the word and provides a child-friendly definition together with several oral examples of usage. All children pronounce the word and a few children are invited to create sentences. It is important to mention that all of the instruction after reading takes place orally, so that children will have an opportunity to hear the words being used in multiple sentences that situate the words in different contexts. This format for vocabulary instruction is an excellent technique for teaching vocabulary more broadly for general reading comprehension. If you are using Text Talk with English learners (or this effective vocabulary instruction protocol), then we recommend that you show the words and sentences in print as you explain them, being sure to use illustrations, photos, or gestures to demonstrate the meanings of the selected vocabulary.

The Text Talk lesson plan in the text box on the next page is a script written by a kindergarten teacher for her read-aloud of *In November* (Rylant, 2000). Most teachers find that writing a detailed lesson plan such as this one enables them to craft the best questions, identify the most useful Tier Two vocabulary, and provide precise definitions and example sentences for the vocabulary. The distractions in a classroom often prohibit this level of effective spontaneous execution, so many teachers find that writing themselves a detailed script or cheat sheet is helpful. Primary-level students have short attention spans so every moment of the read-aloud time block is precious. Plus these lessons can then be taped on the inside of the book or in a file, revised for improvement, and reused the following year. Time well spent one year saves time in the future.

Informational Text Read-Alouds

Children enjoy read-alouds about real things in the world just as much as they enjoy their favorite storybooks. Informational books are especially engaging when

Text: *In November* **by Cynthia Rylant (2000)**

Common Core State Standards

- Speaking/Listening K2: Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.
- Language K4: Determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.
- Language K5: With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

Set

"Today is the first day of November. Today I am going to read the book *In November* by Cynthia Rylant. This book is about many things that happen in the month of November. Raise your hand if you can tell me about something that happens in November. What else happens in nature in November? Today as I read I want you to think about what is happening in the story and make a picture in your mind before I show you the picture. After I finish reading a page and I can tell that you have a picture in your mind or we have talked about what's happening, I will show you the picture that the illustrator drew."

Implementation Procedure

- Read page 1.
  - Ask, "What picture did you draw in your mind?"
  - Follow-up: "What words by the author helped you make that picture in your mind?"
- Read page 2.
  - Ask, "What does the author mean when she says that the trees spread their arms like dancers?"
- Read page 3.
  - Ask, "Why are some birds moving away?"
  - Follow-up: "Where will they go?"
- Read pages 4–7 and show picture.
- Read page 8.
  - Ask, "Do you know of any other ways that animals prepare for winter?"
- Read page 9.
  - Ask, "What does it mean when it says that the smells 'pull everyone from bed in a fog'?"
- Read page 10.

(continued)

- Read pages 10–11 and show picture.
- Read page 11.
- Read pages 12–13 and show picture.
  - Ask, "What does the writer mean, 'The world has tucked her children in, with a kiss on their heads, till spring'?"

Overview Discussion of the Text

Elaborated Vocabulary Instruction

"*Creature*"

- In our story it said that the earth is making a bed for flowers and small *creatures*.
- *Creature* is another word we use for a living being. Both animals and people can be creatures.
- Many little creatures live in that rundown building where there aren't any people.
- Some creatures live inside trees.
- Some people dress like scary creatures on Halloween.
- Tell us about some creatures that you know about.

"*Shiver*"

- In our story it said that the air is chilly and the animals *shiver*.
- When it is very cold, our bodies start to shake to help make us warm. When our bodies shake it is called *shivering*.
- Can someone show me what it looks like when you *shiver*?
- I was shivering when my clothes got wet during the storm.
- I was shivering when I went outside without my coat in the winter.
- I was shivering when I jumped in the ocean.
- Are there times when you *shiver*? Tell me about it using the word *shiver* in your sentence.

"*Treasure*"

- In our story the author says all the berries the birds find will be *treasures*.
- A *treasure* is something that is very important to us, something that we love.
- My niece treasures her new sneakers that light up when she walks. Those sneakers are treasures to her.
- This dolphin bracelet is a treasure to me because my mother gave it to me.
- To me, the smell of the ocean is a treasure. I love closing my eyes and smelling a special smell that you can only smell in one place . . . the seashore.
- Can someone tell me about a *treasure* you may have? Try using the word *treasure* in your sentence. You can use the word to describe your feeling about something or you can tell me something that is a treasure to you.

they are selected as part of a disciplinary theme that is the focus of sustained instruction. Reading informational books expands our students' knowledge of the world and their conceptual vocabulary. Building world knowledge and vocabulary in the early grades is one of the most powerful ways that we can strengthen our students' potential for listening and reading comprehension over time.

The amount and type of talk during a read-aloud of an informational text is distinctly different from a storybook (Smolkin & Donovan, 2001). During the informational text read-aloud, there are more meaning-seeking and meaning-making efforts by children and teachers, resulting in more conversational moves than occur during the typical storybook read-aloud. Often informational books have mixed text structures (i.e., description, sequence, cause and effect, comparison–contrast) that you will need to point out and discuss. Discussion of text features and text structures must go beyond simple identification to an elaboration on how an awareness of the organization supports comprehension and writing (see Chapter 7). During reading, you need to stop intermittently to take stock of student comprehension and to ask more *how* and *why* questions than *what* questions. Allow opportunities for children to interpret, elaborate, retell, hypothesize, make personal associations, and to generate questions. The considerations for informational texts should be applied not only during the teacher read-aloud but should also be applied during shared reading, small-group instructional-level text reading, and conferences following independent student reading. Additionally, providing students with opportunities for writing informational texts should be aligned with reading instruction in ways that deliberately consider text types and text structures.

Up until school entry, most children learn about the world from their experiences or television. Naive beliefs are widespread and difficult to transform because true scientific understanding is abstract and often counterintuitive. Teaching young children to learn about the world from words and from text evidence demands your persistence in employing intentional discussion and astute questioning. Navigating the tension among activating targeted prior knowledge, supporting the integration of prior knowledge with text-based information, and confronting conceptual inaccuracies require diligence and refinement as a teacher. The text box on the next page provides some instructional guidelines for planning and conducting an effective informational text read-aloud. They are in alignment with the CCSS K–2 standards for comprehending informational texts.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is providing support to students as they simultaneously read a common text with you. During shared reading, the teacher initially assumes more responsibility than the children, who may simply follow with their eyes or chime

INFORMATIONAL TEXT READ-ALOUD

Activate Prior Knowledge

- Before reading, discuss prior knowledge about the topic in a targeted way.
- During reading, use questioning and discussion to support ongoing integration of prior knowledge with text-based information.
- During reading, explicitly teach and model how to create a mental image of information in the text.
- During and after reading, explicitly confront inaccurate prior knowledge or conceptions through questioning, discussion, text evidence, and verification processes.

Link Portions of Text

- With prompting and support, teach students to form links among connecting words, sentences, and ideas in a text.
- Prompt and support students to be able to individually summarize and take stock using key ideas in a text.
- Teach text structure and text organization as a means of understanding how the book's macrostructure fits together. Prompt use of this structure and text features to enhance comprehension.

Foster Awareness of the Author

- Prompt a discussion of the author's perspective and background.
- Prompt and support fact checking and the identification of converging evidence in multiple sources on the same topic.
- Identify craft decisions made by the author and illustrator.

Note. Based on Smolkin and Donovan (2001).

in to read repeated phrases during the first reading. Texts used in shared reading are typically read more than once and children assume greater responsibility with each repeated reading. Shared reading is an important instructional context for all novice readers, but especially so for English learners.

Just as our notions of the teacher read-aloud have changed over time, so too has it been necessary to expand our vision of what constitutes appropriate shared reading (Stahl, 2012). The original model of shared reading is derived from Holdaway's (1982) classic description of the Shared Book Experience, which makes use

of big books with emergent readers. The theoretical basis is the concept of scaffolding children to perform tasks at the highest level of their ZPD with teacher support. Therefore, as we move up through grade levels, shared reading should be designed to meet different developmental targets. Its function changes as children change as readers (see Table 3.2). If the teacher read-aloud is the "I do it," then shared reading and shared writing are the "We do it together." Shared reading should be distinctly different from a teacher read-aloud. Like the read-aloud, it is a place to develop a community of readers and writers. Therefore, it needs to be conducted in a whole-class, heterogeneous context. However, unlike the read-loud, children will assume increasing responsibility for reading the text over a few days' time. You should deliberately select a key theme-driven text that children will read as part of a community of learners.

In grades 1 and 2, shared reading serves an important function in developing reading fluency, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development. This is the time during the literacy block when we expect to see teachers and students collaboratively modeling the strategies and behaviors that were explicitly taught during the teacher read-aloud. We are on Step 2 of the GRR staircase of teacher–student ownership and participation.

Provide Visual Access to Text

Our definition of shared reading requires that students have visual access to the same text as the teacher, either in the form of a big book, a personal copy of the text, or a digital display. If you are the only person with a copy of the text and the children are listening to you read, that is a teacher read-aloud, even if children are later returning to their desks to perform the key strategy with a *different* book at their instructional reading level. In order for novice readers to successfully read complex text that might be above their instructional level (CCSS Anchor Standard 10), they need to have their eyes on the text while scaffolding is being provided.

TABLE 3.2. Meeting Developmental Needs with Shared Reading

Grade level	Instructional targets	Texts
PreK–early grade 1	• Print concepts • Phonemic awareness • High-frequency vocabulary • Oral language	• Big books • Poetry charts • Alphabet books
Late grade 1–early grade 3	• Fluency • Comprehension • Conceptual vocabulary	• Complex picture books (narrative and informational) • Poetry

Note. Based on Stahl (2012).

Select Theme-Based Stretch Texts

Including time in the day for *high-quality* shared reading has intensified in importance since the CCSS (NGA & CCSSO, 2010) have increased the readability demands on all children. Primary classrooms now must be vigilant in exposing students to a wide range of text types and text difficulty. Simply reading challenging texts to the children will not prepare them to fluently read, comprehend, and respond to stretch texts in independent settings, including real-life settings and high-stakes tests. Shared reading provides a depth of support that allows children to feel confident when reading and responding to unfamiliar stretch texts. In light of the strong level of reading support, the texts that you choose for shared reading should be at the top of the students' ZPD. They are likely to be the same type of texts that you choose for teacher read-alouds: high-quality picture books with sophisticated vocabulary and rich themes or new information. They are conceptually dense but a bit easier to read than the teacher read-aloud. Caldecott Medal winners, Coretta Scott King Book Award winners, Pura Belpré Award winners, American Indian Youth Literature Awards, or classic authors (e.g., Kevin Henkes, Patricia Polacco, Tomie dePaola, Gail Gibbons) are good starting points. The CCSS Appendix B (NGA & CCSSO, 2010) also lists several books that are appropriate for shared reading at each grade level, although they should be viewed as exemplars, not a canon. Like the teacher read-aloud, the texts should be chosen deliberately as part of a themed unit. Teaching in units provides embedded support that is important for all students, but essential for children of linguistic diversity. You know that you have hit the right level of difficulty if most of the children in the class can read the text comfortably after a few days of exposure to it.

Preschool through Early First Grade

The Shared Book Experience with big books or other enlarged texts is an appropriate model of shared reading for preschool through early first grade (Holdaway, 1982). Teachers and the emergent readers gather together on the carpet to jointly read simple or predictable texts. The primary goal of these sessions is to identify high-frequency vocabulary, develop any unfamiliar conceptual vocabulary, and increase awareness of print concepts such as directionality, capitalization, punctuation, and word boundaries. Many of these books have rhymes and sound play that are good vehicles for developing phonological awareness. Stories with predictable patterns or repeated language structures encourage students to read along. Some of the same questioning techniques that are useful for dialogic reading may be applied to big book lessons. Following the Shared Book Experience, time is allocated for the children to read the big book or a small version of the text with a partner or independently. Many teachers schedule this follow-up reading by students as a center or station during the guided reading time block.

Late First Grade through Second Grade

We believe that a very particular kind of shared reading is crucial for children within this grade and age range. These novice readers must have supported opportunities to read compelling texts with high volumes of words and complex linguistic structures. In our experience, shared reading within this grade band must integrate the development of reading fluency and comprehension. Shared reading of this kind is as essential for accelerating the consolidation of decoding abilities as it is for promoting deep thinking about rich texts. You can bootstrap students' abilities to read texts that are beyond their traditionally identified instructional reading levels through the use of supportive reading techniques such as echo reading, choral reading, and partner reading. Echo reading is when the teacher reads a paragraph or page of text followed by the children reading aloud the same passage; choral reading is when all children read simultaneously. Partner reading is when two children take turns, alternately reading the pages of a text. All of these techniques provide effective graduated support.

Most teachers assign students a reading level based on their ability to read graded passages from an informal reading inventory or little books in a benchmark

TABLE 3.3. Criteria for Interpreting Reading Levels

Level	Word recognition	Comprehension
Betts (1946)		Based on the ability to answer questions[a]
Independent	99–100%	90–100%
Instructional	95–98%	75–89%
Frustration	90% or lower	50% or lower
Fountas & Pinnell (2011) Levels L–Z		Based on a qualitative rating system[a]
Independent	98–100%	Excellent or satisfactory
Instructional	95–97%	Excellent or satisfactory
	98–100%	Limited
Frustration	Below 95%	Any comprehension
Fountas & Pinnell (2011) Levels A–K		Based on a qualitative rating system[a]
Independent	95–100%	Excellent or satisfactory
Instructional	90–94%	Excellent or satisfactory
	95–100%	Limited
Frustration	Below 90%	Any comprehension

[a]Criteria for this rating scale are not clearly defined. No psychometric data are available for the questions that follow each story. Use of questions is based on teacher judgment as a supplement to the retelling.

assessment kit. The Betts (1946) criteria define the instructional level for native English speakers as the highest level at which children can read an unrehearsed text with 95–98% accuracy and 75% comprehension (see Table 3.3). Clay (2006) and Fountas and Pinnell (2011) use a 90% accuracy rate cutoff for the instructional level of beginning readers (through Level K, or mid–second grade) because the instructional format they each recommend for novice readers is more supportive than the traditional whole-class basal reader lesson structure typical of Betts's era (see Table 3.4 for a grade-level translation of Fountas & Pinnell text levels.) *Instructional level is malleable and contingent on the level of instructional support.*

By placing challenging texts in students' hands and providing high levels of instructional scaffolding, there is evidence that children can consolidate isolated skills in accelerated ways to yield fluent, meaningful text reading (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010; Stahl & Heubach, 2005). Fluency-oriented reading instruction (FORI) and wide reading FORI are two similar shared reading protocols that have robust research validation in second grade but are also useful during the second half of first grade. The procedures require 30 minutes of shared reading time each day (see Figure 3.3). FORI provides assistance, coaching, and practice reading challenging texts. It also increases the awareness of reading purposes. Equally important, struggling readers who have often been limited to decodable texts or little books are now reading books that have an emotional hook or informational texts that pique their curiosity about the world. Selecting books that are related to the instructional theme provides an additional means of scaffolding children and enabling them to read more challenging texts.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
FORI	• Prereading activities • Teacher reads the text as class follows along • Discussion of the big ideas and text themes	• Teacher and students echo read the text • Ongoing comprehension discussion and word work coaching	Choral reading	Partner reading	Extension activities
Wide Reading FORI			Extension activities and written responses to text	• Teachers and students echo read a second text selection • Comprehension activities	• Teachers and students echo read a third text selection • Comprehension activities

FIGURE 3.3. FORI and wide reading FORI lesson plan. Based on Schwanenflugel et al. (2009).

Guided Reading

Our model of guided reading for young children is in keeping with the recommendations of Fountas and Pinnell (1996) and Boushey and Moser (2009). Teachers bring together small groups of readers who have similar instructional text reading levels and similar developmental processing behaviors. During guided reading you hold readers accountable for reading text at their instructional level. In kindergarten and first grade, we recommend using a refined gradient of books that have been leveled according to a consistent, well-defined leveling system (Peterson, 1991). The Fountas and Pinnell leveling system is one good example that considers qualitative features such as content familiarity, text structure, page layout, degree of predictability, literary features, degree of text–illustration match, text length, sentence complexity, and word identification (see Table 3.4). However, other commercial or home-grown systems may be used. Nevertheless, schools must conduct periodic professional development to ensure that teachers understand the rationale behind the leveling system and its implications for instruction. Also, it is likely that schools will want to buy books from many different vendors that may use different leveling systems. It is up to the teacher to know the text characteristics that are likely to support or challenge a particular group of readers. This knowledge is also essential in selecting texts for novice readers that will nudge them to the next developmental level of awareness.

We do not believe in using decodable books during the guided reading lesson. Children do need the opportunities to practice reading high concentrations of newly taught letter–sound patterns that are afforded by decodable text. However, we believe that the place for that practice is during the word study component of your literacy block.

TABLE 3.4. Guided Reading Text Reading Level Expectations

Grade										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
K				A	A/B	B	B	C	C	C
1	C/D	D	E	E/F	F	G	G/H	H	I	I
2	I/J	J	J	J/K	K	K/L	L	L	M	M
3	M/N	N	N	N	O	O	O	P	P	P
4	P/Q	Q	Q	Q	R	R	R	S	S	S
5	S/T	T	T	T	U	U	U	V	V	V
6	V/W	W	W	W	X	X	X	X	Y	Y
7	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y/Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z
8	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z

(Header "Months of the school year" spans columns 1–10.)

Note. From Fountas and Pinnell (2011). Copyright 2012 by Heinemann. Reprinted by permission.

It is beyond the scope of this section to fully describe how to conduct an effective guided reading lesson, as novice readers' developmental needs change across time. Studying books written on the topic (e.g., Boushey & Moser, 2009; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), viewing videos of small-group instruction at different text levels, and ongoing professional development are the best ways to learn how to conduct effective guided reading lessons. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) provide detailed descriptions of how to deliver developmentally appropriate new book introductions and how to use running record data to inform teaching decisions in the guided reading lessons for kindergarten and first graders. Boushey and Moser (2009) do a particularly good job of providing organizational suggestions for planning teacher-led guided reading lessons and the independent student centers. In this section, we focus on the *comprehension* considerations at early and later levels of the text reading component of the guided reading lesson.

Reading Level: Kindergarten to Mid–First Grade (Fountas & Pinnell Levels A–G)

Novice readers need small-group opportunities to orchestrate the reading process and to monitor that what they are reading makes sense, looks right (letter–sound correspondence), and sounds right grammatically. Level A–G books do not have the fodder for rich comprehension instruction.

We want to get books in children's hands as early as possible. When children are in the earliest stages of word recognition, they can read caption books and be held accountable for one-to-one matching of two or three words on a page that label the pictures. This is the stage at which we begin to call the emergent reader a novice reader. Novice readers are print driven, rather than relying *solely* on the pictures and patterns to "read." The child's oral reading should make sense, follow the text's structure, and look right (letters match spoken sounds). A brief new book introduction (three sentences) by the teacher should provide an overview of the meaning, text structure, and syntax of the story. A *brief* picture walk-through of the book helps the children get an overview of how the book's parts contribute to the whole (macrostructure) and establishes both the syntactic structure (often predictable language structures) and the text structure to propel reading. It is the child's job to apply his or her word-recognition abilities (at this stage, making a voice–print match) to arrive at an accurately read message. Over time, the child will progressively need to apply knowledge of first letter, one-to-one matching, final letter, and vowel patterns in order to accurately read the increasingly difficult texts. However, throughout the ongoing development of refined word-recognition abilities, the child self-monitors his or her comprehension by mentally asking, "Did what I read make sense?"

In text Levels A–G, the teaching points that follow reading typically focus on self-monitoring and cross-checking the three cueing systems: meaning, structure,

and visual (letter–sound relationships). This juggling act is difficult for the novice reader and worthy of teaching thoroughly during the guided reading lessons at these early text levels. Regular running records of oral reading with an error analysis can provide strong evidence at this stage of development about the degree to which a novice is reading for meaning. Do the child's errors make sense but consistently ignore the letter–sound relationships being taught during word study? Or is the child inefficiently stopping to sound out concrete words that are blatantly indicated by the context of the story or in the picture? At this stage of reading, you must be acutely aware of each child's developmental word-recognition stage (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2011) and hold him or her accountable for applying the word-recognition skills indicated at that developmental stage while nudging the child's awareness forward to the next stage. Fluency and phrasing also provide evidence of meaning making at this stage. The anecdotal notes that you take during text reading and running records inform teaching points that immediately follow the children's reading in the guided reading lesson.

Because these texts are so meager, it is essential for rich, high-level comprehension instruction to be occurring during the teacher read-aloud and shared reading. If you have strong comprehension instruction happening during the teacher read-aloud and shared reading, you don't need to feel pressured to create contrived comprehension responses to these simple texts. For that matter, a 15-minute guided reading lesson that includes attention to text reading, word work, and guided writing does not allow time for deep comprehension probes or instruction. Often, well-intentioned teachers may overdo prediction before reading and force conversations in response to easy texts that lack fully developed narrative structures with cohesive plot episodes or a comprehensive set of story grammar elements.

Level F and Level G books are likely to have episodes or information that provide fruitful opportunities for a simple retelling. Because these texts are short, we like to ask a single child to give a comprehensive retelling or to share the key information with the person sitting next to him or her. For example, when reading the book *Our Dog Sam* (Bacon, 1988), it is logical to prompt the children by saying, "Tell your partner some of the things that Sam liked to do." In addition to the explicit instruction on how to retell a story or information provided during read-alouds and shared reading, you can prompt and provide verbal scaffolding in the small-group context. One of the functions of the guided reading group context is to informally assess who can't retell these short instructional-level texts and to provide immediate, specific, and individualized feedback.

Often children have difficulty providing an individual comprehensive retelling when prompted during benchmark testing because during instruction they have only been asked to provide a bit of what they have read, not recount the entire story or detailed information. In light of these factors, *when assessing students who are reading in early text levels, accuracy should trump comprehension in deciding whether or not to move a child to the next level.*

Reading Level: Mid–First Grade to Mid–Second Grade (Fountas & Pinnell Levels H–K)

The texts at these levels change in ways that cause a shift in book introduction and student accountability. The texts become longer, less repetitive, and less predictable. Because the stories are longer, and children still need to read them at the teacher-led table, time management becomes trickier when we work with these groups. Although your new book introduction should still consist of a brief overview of the story or defining the purpose for reading, the picture walk needs to be reconsidered because the words on the page only relate in a general way to the illustrations. As the readers are still novices, they need to approach their first reading of the text with the gist of the story or key ideas in mind. Picture walks at this stage need to be very brief, with the children doing most of the talking to set purposes for reading. We have found that the directed reading–thinking activity (DR-TA) often supports comprehension and new knowledge acquisition more effectively than a picture walk, especially for informational texts at this level (Stahl, 2009; Stauffer, 1969). In planning a DR-TA lesson, the teacher identifies logical stopping points. Just before the children read the first section, the teacher asks them to make predictions about what will happen (in fiction) or what they will learn (in informational text). The children then mumble-read or read silently. When the group reaches each stopping point, the teacher first guides them as they revisit their predictions, helping them clarify confusions and taking stock of what was read. Then the teacher asks them to make new predictions for the next section. This cycle is repeated for each section of text. Additionally, since these books tend to be longer and address more complex content than easier books, novice readers benefit from having intermittent opportunities to monitor understanding and to take stock of what has been read (see the text box below). Chapter 5 provides more information on using the DR-TA more broadly.

PLANNING A DIRECTED READING–THINKING ACTIVITY FOR GUIDED READING

- Divide the text into sensible two- to three-page sections.
- Students generate predictions and justify their predictions for a single two- to three-page section of text.
- Students mumble-read or silently read the section of text.
- After reading each section of text, students verify or revise their prediction and discuss that section of text.
- The process is repeated for each section of text.

Children may softly mumble-read and transition to silent reading. There should not be any finger-pointing at this level except to focus on a tricky word. Teaching points after reading are likely to focus on word-recognition strategies for multisyllabic words and supporting students in keeping the meaning at the forefront while they apply the most efficient word-recognition strategy to achieve an accurate reading. These longer texts are likely to have narrative episodes or simple information about a disciplinary topic. Running-record error analyses are still valuable for evaluating whether children are reading to make sense of text. Children should be expected to retell what they read. During guided reading lessons at this level, you should provide verbal scaffolding and prompting to instruct the children what a good retelling or informational text summary includes. During benchmark assessing of texts at Levels H and I, your decisions about instructional text level should still rely more heavily on accuracy than a student's comprehension rating. This is especially important if your assessment system does not provide a detailed scoring guide for the retelling (as explained more fully in Chapter 8) or a set of 8–10 explicit–implicit questions that are specific to the text. However, if your assessment meets that criteria and you are confident that you have provided your students with explicit instruction on how to generate a good retelling or summary and that this instruction was followed by many guided instructional opportunities for the children to individually construct a retelling or text summary, applying specific comprehension scores to the criteria for determining a child's instructional text level is appropriate.

Reading Level: Beyond Mid–Second Grade (Fountas & Pinnell Level L)

As Fountas and Pinnell (2011) indicate by their shift in criteria for determining instructional level (from 90% accuracy to 95% accuracy), the focus now becomes comprehension. Brief new book introductions, comprehension instruction, reinforcement, and comprehension strategy application occur at the table, but typically the reading occurs before children arrive for their 20- to 30-minute small-group lesson with the teacher. The accuracy criterion for the instructional level increases from 90 to 95% because students are receiving less instructional support *during* reading than they received at the earlier levels. With less instructional support, there is a lower threshold for the process breaking down. It will take fewer errors to result in meaning-making hurdles.

Now the readability gradient for leveling texts widens because the pressure points that influence a student's ability to successfully read the book are less tied to the linear development of word recognition and more tied to other pressure points such as prior knowledge, conceptual vocabulary, genre, text structure, conceptual density of the text, and self-regulation. At this stage of reading development, the

measurement tools used to develop Lexiles begin to be more sensitive to what makes a book easy or hard for a student than a qualitative scale, such as the Fountas and Pinnell (1996) leveling system.

During guided reading, students apply the comprehension strategies that were taught during the read-aloud and shared reading to personal reading materials at their instructional level. Now, the small teacher-led group becomes the setting for discussion and to insert follow-up questions that lead to high levels of thinking about the common texts that students are reading away from the table. Although writing in response to text often occurs away from the guided reading table, it is shared with teacher and peers for feedback during the guided reading lesson. This level of scaffolding is very different from a workshop model, which involves meeting each child individually for a few minutes once a week for a conference. Instead, the model we are describing provides an additional layer of instructional support before the child is asked to be accountable independently. The children in the guided reading group have common developmental needs or may be working on a common project, so children are learning from the teacher and from one another around a common text. Also, because the lessons are 20–30 minutes two or three times a week instead of 5 or 10 minutes once or twice a week, the lessons achieve a greater depth of processing than is possible during a conference.

Scheduling Guided Reading

In a classroom literacy block, 45–60 minutes need to be allocated to guided reading (see Figure 3.2). In kindergarten and first grade, that allows the teacher to meet with each group daily. In second and third grades, the teacher would meet with the neediest group daily, grade-level groups two or three times a week, and high-performing students twice a week. During the time that students are not with the teacher, they work in productive stations or centers that are the sites of differentiated practice, follow-up activities to the guided reading lesson, and independent reading. Appendices 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 (at the end of the chapter) provide sample time distributions for literacy activities at Mott Haven Academy, a charter elementary school.

Independent Reading

Children should be given time for independent reading each day. Typically in primary classrooms, this independent reading time is one of the workstations or centers offered while the teacher is meeting with the guided reading groups. In kindergarten and first grade, independent reading ranges from 10 to 15 minutes. In second grade, it ranges from 20 to 30 minutes or the length of a single guided

reading lesson. Independent choice reading is also assigned as homework each day for equivalent time frames.

Conclusion

The GRR is an important pedagogical understanding when teaching comprehension because, unlike constrained skills, comprehension is never mastered. The GRR is a structure that allows for a reader to receive high levels of support when engaging in a difficult task and gradually assuming ownership for the task. This model of support allows for children to continue to grow so that they can meet more difficult reading challenges.

Organizing the literacy block to include the four instructional contexts described in this chapter provides a range of teacher support that allows children to be exposed to texts that range in level of difficulty. When the support by teachers is complemented by engaging, supportive content, it creates a classroom where readers can achieve their highest potential in developing reading comprehension. In Chapter 4, we discuss the role that content plays in helping students thrive in a rich learning context.