RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING COMPREHENSION FOR K-12 LEARNERS
Washington State Association of School Psychologists
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Roadmap

- Introductions
- Session 1:
  - What is Comprehension?
  - Text Complexity: Myths and Facts
  - Analyzing Texts
  - The Role of Knowledge
- Session 2:
  - Selecting Texts
- Session 3:
  - Scaffolding Comprehension
    - Before, During, After
- Session 4:
  - Assessment
  - Questions and Closing

About Me

Session 1: Comprehension?

“My reading comprehension is so-so, but I make up for it with my highlighting skills.”
RAND: Comprehension Model

What Are We Asking Students to Do?
- Critical: Evaluate and synthesize ideas across texts, apply knowledge to novel situations
- Inferential: Read between the lines, use prior knowledge to make inferences or analyses about the text
- Literal: Recall key ideas and details

Instruction Should Include:
- Different perspectives, text types
- Synthesize, evaluate, apply knowledge
- Tasks that allow students to apply knowledge from a text

Successful Readers Are Also:
- Active
- Purposeful
- Evaluative
- Thoughtful
- Strategic
- Persistent
- Productive
Comprehension is an Orchestration of Skills

- Skills are used together to develop an understanding of a text
- Individual skills cannot be broken down and taught separately
- Highly correlated

Authors: Afflerbach & Chi, 2011; Pearson, Valencia, & Wixson, 2014

Instruction Should Include:

- Integration of skills such as main idea and author's purpose throughout the year
- Units designed around a topic or theme rather than "main idea" or "author's purpose"
- Assessments and tasks that integrate skills
- Comprehension as an orchestration of skills

Text Complexity

Rigorous Reading or Instructional Level Texts?

Call to increase the rigor

VERSUS

The traditional view of matching students with instructional level texts
What the Research Shows

**Instructional Level Texts**
- Increase fluency for early elementary students
- Increase decoding skill for K-1
- Build background knowledge
- Increase confidence

**Challenging Texts**
- Increase motivation and engagement
- Increase exposure to challenging vocabulary and concepts
- Necessary to make inferences and develop higher level analysis skills

Text Selection Considerations

- What makes a text challenging
- Level of support you will provide and type of tasks

Struggle is not a bad word.

Three-Part Model of Text Complexity

**Inherent to the Text:**
1. Quantitative Measures
2. Qualitative Features

**Teacher Considerations:**
3. Reader and Task

Quantitative: Lexile or Readability

- Represents text complexity as a numerical value – for example: 820L or “8th grade” level
- Determined by a computer
- Based on:
  - Sentence and word length
  - Word frequency
Which text is more complex?

- *Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White

Complexity is More Than Just a Number!

Qualitative Text Complexity

- **Meaning**
  - Layers of meaning
  - Concept complexity
  - Theme
- **Structure**
  - Organization
  - Text Features
  - Connections between ideas
- **Language**
  - Vocabulary
  - Syntax
  - Figurative Language
  - Historical Language or Dialects
- **Knowledge**
  - Content Knowledge
  - Disciplinary Literacy skills
  - Background and Experiences

Why Does This Matter?

"Understanding the challenges that readers might face is necessary for providing adequate supports to ensure that all students will be able to comprehend the text."

"Struggle is Not a Bad Word: Misconceptions and Recommendations About Readers Struggling with Difficult Texts"
By Sarah M. Lupo, John Z. Strong, Kristin Conradi Smith

What Not to Do

- Blind matching using readability or Lexile
- Keep kids who may struggle and ELLs away from challenging texts
Where do we start?

Analyze texts to determine the challenges they present to readers

- What background knowledge does the author assume the reader has, and does the reader have that knowledge?
- Are there multiple meanings or abstract concepts/themes?
- Are students familiar with most of the words? Are there a lot of academic words, complex syntax, discipline specific words, or figurative language?
- Is this text structured in a way that makes it easy to understand (i.e., good use of headings) or is the structure of the text complicated (i.e., does the reader have to infer how ideas are connected)?

### Example of Text Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Feature</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background Knowledge</td>
<td>Students need to know what a watershed is and the concepts of economic sustainability and environmental stewardship as well as have an understanding of how water sources work and why it matters.</td>
<td>“The watershed includes the Porcupine Reservoir.” “Because of our commitment to long term economic sustainability and environmental stewardship, we are in the process of developing a supply base.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning or Purpose</td>
<td>Does not contain multiple meanings or abstract concepts or themes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Contains academic, discipline specific, and abstract language</td>
<td>Watershed, conservation, economic, sustainable, environmental stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of Text</td>
<td>Minimal challenges as the structure is clear and pictures support learning</td>
<td>&quot;Watering Where Your Water Comes From&quot; is clear with a picture to support student understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pacific Cod: The Ageing of a Difficult Species

Historically, fish scales and otoliths have been the two most common structures used for determining the ages of fish species. Unfortunately, age-readers employing these structures have experienced limited success in the case of Pacific cod.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Feature</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Topic and vocabulary knowledge challenging</td>
<td>Knowledge of the structures for determining age of fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of the structures for determining age of fish</td>
<td>Why fish scales and otoliths are the common structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Why Pacific cod is a difficult species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Abstract concepts described</td>
<td>Determining ages of fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Many abstract, discipline specific words and syntax</td>
<td>Otoliths, age-readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Background Knowledge


**Example:**

*The City of Harrisonburg has two reliable water supply sources. The city in Harrisonburg has the commitment to long term economic, sustainable, and environmental stewardship, we are in the process of developing a supply base for the future.*

Centering on Diverse Forms of Knowledge

Linguistic Knowledge
Knowledge of language practices and linguistic structures

Conditional Knowledge
Metacognitive understanding of when, how, and why to use different types of knowledge

Disciplinary Knowledge

Cultural Knowledge
Knowledge of values and practices of a group of people

Strategic Knowledge
Principled knowledge
Deep understanding of the way ideas are connected to each other

Multimodal Text Knowledge

Which of these statements is true?

Truth
- Adolescents’ background knowledge shapes how they interpret a text

Misconception
- Some adolescents lack knowledge to understand complex texts

Threading Content and Literacy is a Powerful Approach

- “Learning to read (the process of learning how to decode phonics patterns) and reading to learn (reading to learn content) cannot and should not be separated. Rather, students should build understanding of what they are reading at the same time as they are building their understanding and honing their skills of how to read”
How we approach students’ knowledge matters

Why is Activating Knowledge Important?

ALL students bring relevant knowledge to the reading experience.

"By reframing the knowledge gap, educators can position children as having multiple strengths... to support the reading experience”

Hattan, C., & Lupo, S. M. (2020). Rethinking the Role of Knowledge in the K-12 Literacy Classroom. Reading Research Quarterly.

Recommendations for K-12 Schools

- Provide opportunities for students to read high-quality, content-based texts alongside valuing their funds of knowledge
- Support children to use this knowledge to comprehend and learn from texts
- Value and develop diverse forms of knowledge beyond content knowledge.

Session 2: Selecting Texts

Write down one thing you will share with your colleagues about knowledge.
What do I mean by “texts?”

- Center on a single topic (i.e., insects, desert animals, entrepreneurship)
- Contain a variety of texts (i.e., books, articles, videos, websites, infographics)

The Quad Text Set: Rethinking Text Sets

Comprehension Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase text volume</td>
<td>Use a set of related texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embrace complexity</td>
<td>Select a challenging target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build knowledge</td>
<td>Include visual texts and simpler information texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target motivation</td>
<td>Deliberately select a text to garner buy-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Target Text Examples

- **Social studies**
  - Textbook chapter
  - Article with applications of social studies themes
  - Primary source documents
- **Math**
  - Word problem
  - Complex concept (fractions)
- **Science**
  - Research report
  - Steps of an experiment
  - A pop science article
  - Textbook chapter
- **English**
  - Excerpt from a challenging chapter book
  - Poem
  - Short Story

The Quad Text Set

- **Text 1:** Challenging content-area "target" text
  - Video: School House Rocks - The Three Branches of Government
  - Hook: Grace for President

- **Text 2:** Visual or video text to activate or build background knowledge
  - Video/Visual: Graphs of WWII deaths by country AND pictures of national monuments in DC

- **Text 3:** Informational text(s) to provide additional background knowledge and opportunities for connections and differentiation
  - Info Text: US Veteran’s Day Parade to Honor Those Who Served

- **Text 4:** Contemporary young adult fiction or nonfiction text chosen for its relationship to overarching themes or unit purposes
  - Poem: For the Unknown Enemy by William Stafford
  - Hook: Short story called The Bracelet about a Japanese girl in an internment camp who loses a bracelet her friend gave her to remember her
Creating a Quad Text Set

1. **Select a topic and a “target text”**
   - Complex because of language + knowledge demands
   - Aligned with curricular goals

2. **Gather additional texts**
   - Visual texts – support knowledge building for target text
   - Hook text – to invest students
   - Informational Texts – to build knowledge

3. **Purposefully sequence the resources**
   - Consider the content and complexity (less → more complex)

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Quad Text Set Framework

**Step 1: Select a Topic and a “Target Text”**

- Is the topic specific enough? Is there an opportunity to make it even more specific?
- Will reading about this topic deepen students’ understanding of the discipline I teach?
- Will I be able to find a range of accessible and appropriately complex texts on this topic?
- Is this text rich and complex?
Things to Consider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the most logical way to sequence the content?</td>
<td>Which texts are less complex, and should be read early in the sequence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what order must students be introduced to new ideas and concepts?</td>
<td>Which texts are more complex, and should be read later in the sequence?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where to Find Texts?

- www.sciencenewsforkids.org (Science, History)
- www.readinga-z.com (free trial, all subjects)
- www.learninga-z.com (free trial, sciencea-z here)
- www.timeforkids.com (Science, History, English)
- www.kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/ (History, Science)
- www.bet.com (short, fun news or health trends)
- www.readworks.org (all subjects, best for English)
- www.lexile.com (all subjects, book searches)
- www.Newsele.com (all subjects)
- www.Getepic.com (all subjects)

Scaffolding Instruction

- Problem:
  - Gap between students knowledge, skills, and demands of text/content

- Solution:
  - Teacher provides support and instruction
Supporting Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Reading</th>
<th>During Reading</th>
<th>After Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Activate relevant knowledge</td>
<td>- Provide supports to scaffold the reader's understanding the passage</td>
<td>- Evaluate and analyze the text through writing and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Engage reader with the topic</td>
<td>- ASSIST</td>
<td>- Apply knowledge to a novel situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Set a purpose for reading</td>
<td>- REFLECT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- PREPARE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Setting a Purpose Before Reading

The House

On your handout, read the story *The House* and underline the main idea and most important details.

- What did you find important?
- What was difficult about this task?

Purpose Setting

**DO THIS**
- Provide a text specific purpose for reading a text
  - **Read the following text and identify the lifecycle stages of a spider**
  - Help students set a purpose for reading so they know what information to look for

**NOT THIS**
- Tell students to read and identify the main idea or author’s purpose
  - **Purpose for reading is text and task specific!**
Setting a Purpose: Be Captain Obvious

Knowledge Matters

How we approach students’ knowledge matters

Knowledge SHAPES our comprehension

Hattan & Lupo (2020), Lupo et al. (2019)

What About Building Knowledge?

- We build knowledge through reading multiple texts about a topic or theme and thoughtfully ordering texts from easier to more complex.
- Then, we maximize learning knowledge from the texts using scaffolding techniques

What is Activating Knowledge?

Activating knowledge is “helping students bring relevant prior experiential knowledge to the foreground”

“The goal of activating knowledge is to make it “more likely that [students] will use that knowledge to understand the text”

Carrell and Riebert, “Knowledge at the Center of ELA Instruction”
Anticipation Guides

- Agree/disagree with statements related to the texts
- Read to prove/disprove their answers
- Include important vocabulary and concepts
- Include provocative statements to engage students

Text: Was Edward Snowden a Traitor?

Anticipation Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Before Reading</th>
<th>After Reading</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The government has the right to listen in on phone conversations of regular people in order to protect the nation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The US government has violated the fourth amendment by tapping cell phones.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2001 privacy act does not give permission for the government to listen in on phone calls.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my parents to listen in on my phone calls in order to protect me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Snowden is a traitor and should be tried in the US for leaking government secrets.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Text: Phase Changes of Matter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement and Evidence</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gas matter does not take up space. Evidence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Temperature doesn't affect phase change. Evidence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gas to solid change to liquids. Evidence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Liquid needs hot temperature to evaporate. Evidence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KWL Promotes Discussion

- Before
  - Know
  - Wonder
  - Learn

- During
  - Share
  - Record

- After
  - Reflect
What if Students Don’t Share Knowledge?

- **Switch topics**
  - Students have limited information about the topic of Syria so the teacher asks about another related topic to the article, the Holocaust

- **Go broader:**
  - Students have limited knowledge of the country of Guinea so teacher asks about Africa in general

Pre-Post Journal

Students share ideas in response to a prompt BEFORE they read or learn about it, and then afterwards they’ll come back to it and write about how their thinking was affirmed or adjusted.

**Example:** How did women gain the right to vote? Who were the key players? Is voting now fair or are some groups of people still discriminated against?

What if What Students Want to Learn Isn’t What You Need Them to Learn?

- “Does Ebola affect your bowel movements?”
- What are the symptoms of Ebola?
- “Can newborn babies contract Ebola?”
- Who can contract Ebola?
- Who is impacted most by the Ebola virus?

What About Vocabulary?

- Engage students with vocabulary but don’t pre-teach
- Focus on teaching vocabulary AFTER reading
Example: Probable Passage

- Choose a list of 8 to 12 key words from the reading
- Use a graphic organizer
- Place the words in specific boxes
- Students then formulate a "gist statement" about what they will read.

- Before-reading activity
- A way to build common background knowledge regarding a story, unit, or event.

Let's Try Probable Passage

Example: Life along the Nile.

Key words: Egyptian, receded, desert, Nile, 6,000 B.C.E., silt, canals, irrigation, papyrus, barren, Sahara, farming

Probable Passage After Reading

- Consider:
  - Would you move any of the words around?
  - Can you explain why you have words where you have them?
  - Would you change your gist statement?

Chunking

- Divide a text into smaller "chunks"
- Chunks may be uneven in size
- Provide supports between readings of chunks

But, why chunk content? It helps you present information in a way that makes it easy for your audience to understand and remember.
**DL/RTA**

- Directed Listening/Reading and Thinking Activity
- Students make predictions and revisit predictions while reading
- Chunk text, stop between chunks
- Choose 4-5 good stopping points
- Introduce and engage students with the text
- Make a prediction before reading
- Assign (or read aloud) the first chunk and discuss initial prediction
- Stop after each chunk, make a new prediction or adjust initial prediction
- Repeat with the remaining chunks of the text

**Interactive Read Alouds**

- Help students build or activate knowledge & vocab
- Develop basic reading skills (COW/P, PA, rhyme)
- Develop students cognitive capabilities (ability to reason, evaluate, infer)
- Develop students' linguistic awareness & understanding of genres
- Select appropriately challenging text
- Chunk the text and plan questions to ask
- Engage all students in participating
- Ask inferential questions
- Provide an opportunity to write afterwards

**Content Area DRTA**

**Think Alouds**

**WHAT IT IS**

- Attend to the four types of thinking (vocab, comp, text features and structure)
- Teacher models thinking
- Teacher provides an opportunity for students to try the same kind of thinking AFTER modeling

**WHAT IT’S NOT**

- Asking students questions to prompt thinking about a story WITHOUT first modeling the thinking
- Asking students comprehension questions
How to Design a Think Aloud

1. Select a couple of (short!) segments of your text to read aloud
2. Select a part of that text that students may find confusing
3. Select a strategy to model for your students to demonstrate how you make sense of the confusing part
4. Write a script of what you will say during your think aloud
5. Provide an opportunity for your students to practice the same kind of thinking with another part of this text

How to Create a Reading Guide

- Read the entire text and identify the places that students will struggle
- Return to each spot and decide exactly why this spot is difficult
- Create a support for each spot:
  - Provide a brief explanation
  - Help students make a connection
  - Write guiding questions
  - Create a table or graphic organizer to show how ideas are related
  - Find a visual that can help
  - Define key vocabulary terms

Reading Guides

DO THIS
- Written directions and a compilation of supports from you to the students to help students understand a particular text
- Effective in all content areas
- Personalized to each text

NOT THIS
- NOT comprehension questions at the end of the chapter or reading

How to Create a Reading Guide

- Compile supports in chronological order
- Make sure that students are moving back and forth between the text and the reading guide during reading
- Other ways to support reading:
  - Create a timeline for students to track ideas
  - Have students keep track of characters in a graphic organizer
  - List events and students can jot down notes about these events as they read through

From Cracking the Common Core by Lewis, Walpole, and McKenzie, 2014
Reading Guide: Primary Source Document

The Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863)
Abraham Lincoln

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take

Right-Hand/Source Column

Twelve years later — Twenty

Period

Am I not a man and a brother?

Let’s Think!
Thomas Jefferson called the United States an experiment. Think about the following questions and write your response in the right column:

What is being tested?

Take away

What did they do?

What did they do?

What did they do?

Do students need to write on the guide?

Double Entry Journal

- A chance to make personal response connections to their reading (or viewing or listening)
- A two-column chart: in the left column, students record direct quotes from the source; in the right column, they use sentence starters to react to those quotes
- Examples: “I found out...,” “I was surprised...,” “I would ask the author...” and so on.

Double Entry Journal: Robinson
- How does this source contect or support the textbook account?
- What specific phrases or information in the sources support your comparison?
- How might we revise the textbook account to reflect our new information? What sentences need revision? How so?

Write down quotes from the text that contest or support the textbook account. Reflect on how the quotes support or context the textbook account.
Summarizing

- AIDS in comprehension (note- not checking comprehension)

- Must be scaffolded, modeled, and explicitly taught

ABC Summary Statements

- **Identify:** Who?
  
- **Select a verb:** demonstrates, defends, presents, contrasts, describes, suggests, argues

- **Summarize! Use this strategy:**
  
  A. Identify + B. Select a Verb + C. Finish your thought:
  
  (Who) (verbing, presents, contrasts, describes, suggests, argues) (Big idea, main concept)

Somebody Wants But So

Best with narrative texts

- **Somebody** - name an important character
- **Wants** - what does this person want in the text?
- **But** - what is preventing this person from getting what they want?
- **So** - What do they do solve their problem and get what they want?

Note- can be repeated for multiple characters/people

SWBS Example

Courtesy of Alexa Weeks
Support Students’ Learning from Texts

**Before Reading**
- Activate what they know about a topic
- Set a text-specific purpose for reading the text with students

**During & After Reading**
- Assist students in integrating new knowledge with prior knowledge

Classroom Talk

- Elaborate on ideas
- Evaluate ideas
- Analyze and interpret the text
- Provide evidence to support ideas
- Make analogies and connections to other texts
- Argue, speculate, share opinions
- Teacher asks students to:

Revisit Before Reading Strategies

- Anticipation Guide
- KWLS
- Probable Passage
- Pre-post journal

Increase amount of reading
- Improve students’ overall literacy abilities

Increase amount of writing
- Write about what they read

Graham & Hebert, 2010

Juzwik et al., 2013; Mercer & Littleton, 2007

Graham & Hebert, 2010
Free Response Journal

- Students write in an open-ended fashion about a prompt or stimulus
- Allows for a number of prior knowledge connections
- An open-ended way to connect with provocative readings

  □ Example: What do you know about Rosa Parks?
  OR
  □ Describe a time when someone misjudged you or misunderstood you.

Perspective Journal

- Ask students to put themselves into a situation or into another person’s shoes
- The perspective doesn’t have to be a human one: Students could write from the perspective of:
  - A black widow
  - An electron
  - The role of a water drop in the water cycle
  □ Example: Write from the perspective of one of the groups of people prevented from voting in the 2016 election—how did you feel? What can you do to solve the situation?

ReQuest

□ Students create two questions about the text.
□ The purpose of your questions is not to trick or trip up your classmates with minutiae but to demonstrate your understanding of the reading and to help your classmates understand the reading.
□ The oldest person in the group goes first and asks one of his or her questions to the person on the left.
□ The person who is selected to answer will answer to the best of his or her ability (using the text is encouraged) and then the other group members may chime in after to agree or disagree. The answerer provides the final answer.

Revisit Vocabulary

□ Concept maps or sorts
□ List-Group-Label
□ Graphic organizers (e.g., tree diagram, continuum, Venn Diagram)
Session 4: Assessment

Assessing Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Expression/Prosody</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(% words read correctly)</td>
<td>(scaled rubric)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(words read per minute)</td>
<td>(% questions answered correctly)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comprehension Assessment

- Comprehension is text & experience specific
  - Motivation, reading attitudes, background knowledge play an indefinable role
  - Complex and dynamic: an orchestration of skills
  - Difficult to “quantify” and measure

Constrained vs. Unconstrained Skills (Stahl, 2011)

- **Constrained Skills**
  - Include limited number of items and can be mastered
  - **Examples:** Alphabet, fluency, phonics patterns

- **Unconstrained Skills**
  - Learned across a lifetime
  - Variable across texts
  - Never fully “mastered” because proficiency varies
  - **Examples:** Vocabulary, knowledge, comprehension
Types of Comprehension Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assessment</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension of a specific passage</td>
<td>A test about a particular book or text, summary of a book, answering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(formative assessment)</td>
<td>comprehension questions about a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm-Based Measures</td>
<td>NWEA MAP assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards-based Tests</td>
<td>&quot;Benchmark&quot; tests, often created by schools or publishers to determine if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students have achieved the standards (main idea, author’s purpose, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comprehension of a Specific Passage

Read a passage and assess understanding of that passage.

But what if I assessed your reading of:
1. Graduate level Chemistry textbook?
2. The Knowledge Gap by Wexler?

How might your own comprehension vary?
What does that tell us?

A Word on Reading Level

- ONE factor in determining a students’ literacy “health”
- The measures for determining reading level are often norm-based
- But how we determine text levels is not aligned

What can we learn from each assessment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assessment</th>
<th>What it tells us about students’ comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension of a specific passage</td>
<td>Whether students understood this particular passage (easy, challenging?) with the scaffolds we provided (Formative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(formative assessment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm-Based Measures</td>
<td>How students performed relative to others (screener)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards-based Tests</td>
<td>How students may perform on the end of year standardized assessment (screener)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diagnosing Needs and Measuring Progress

How much scaffolding do students need? (and how does that vary across texts?)

What types of scaffolds help my neediest readers?

Can my students read and understand harder texts with fewer scaffolds as the year goes on?

The Measure We Need

We need a comprehension assessment that…

- Supports complex nature of comprehension (captures scaffolding and text level)
- Utilizes authentic texts and tasks
- Shows how students perform with various texts and levels of scaffolding

Solution: “Narrative Profiles”

- Multiple authentic texts of varying levels of difficulty
- Tasks that are part of regular instruction
- Different levels of scaffolding
- Can be repeated throughout the year to capture growth

What is a Task?

- A task is what you want students to do with what they read.
- Examples:
  - Describe a character’s motivation for acting in a story in an exit ticket or graphic organizer
  - Explain the process of photosynthesis in a journal
  - Justify your anticipation guide responses “after” reading

Name a task that you might use!
What can this look like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Scaffolding</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easier text</td>
<td>Pro/Con article about fighting for freedom (DR-TA, pre-post journal)</td>
<td>LOW (Post journal response about fighting for freedom)</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>Fiction story with freedom theme</td>
<td>MEDIUM (Double entry journal)</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>Article about Syrian crisis</td>
<td>HIGH (L of KWL chart)</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can also use a rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>High Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Some comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comprehension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can also look for growth across texts and tasks and create a profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Below GL, low scaffolding</th>
<th>On GL, medium scaffolding</th>
<th>Above GL, high scaffolding</th>
<th>Student Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Challenging texts tough even with high scaffolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discussion based scaffolds seem to help the most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janae</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Demonstrates some comprehension of all texts with supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Needs additional scaffolding with easier texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marisol</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing based scaffolds help a lot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can compile additional data too

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Below</th>
<th>On MED</th>
<th>Above MED</th>
<th>Low Passage</th>
<th>Medium Passage</th>
<th>On Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acc WPM Pros</td>
<td>Acc WPM Pros</td>
<td>Acc WPM Pros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 160 4</td>
<td>100 140 4</td>
<td>98 140 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98 180 3</td>
<td>96 170 3</td>
<td>90 170 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>89 90 3</td>
<td>85 80 2</td>
<td>75 75 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>99 200 4</td>
<td>98 180 4</td>
<td>96 170 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>85 93 2</td>
<td>80 78 2</td>
<td>70 65 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Steps for Creating a Narrative Profile

**Step 1:** Identify **Texts & Text Levels**

**Step 2:** Create **Scaffolds** to support readers

**Step 3:** Create **Tasks** the reader will complete

**Step 4:** **Assess** comprehension of reader *(can use a rubric)*

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Reflection and Closing

**Questions?**

*Thank you for your time!*

- **Stay in touch:**
  - luposm@jmu.edu
  - Follow me on twitter: @dssarahlupo
  - Blog: www.appliedliteracy.net

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Additional Resources

**Articles**

- Check out additional articles here: [https://tinyurl.com/washPDresources](https://tinyurl.com/washPDresources)

**Book Available Summer of 2021!**

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