



Professional Book Discussion Guide

Book Title: *The Key Comprehension Routine, Grades K-3*

Summary of Book: *This is the training book used during professional development for “The Key Comprehension Routine: Primary Grades”. Part I provides an overview of the program, best practices for effective comprehension in the primary grades, and the important role of oral language as a foundation for comprehension. Part II presents instructional suggestions for text structure, categorizing, main idea skills, and text discussion. Part III provides details about the four comprehension strategies that make up the routine: (1) Top-Down Topic Webs, (2) Two-Column Note Taking, (3) Summarizing, (4) Question Generation. Part IV shows how the strategies can be combined and offers suggestions for school-wide implementation.*

Part I

Chapter 1: What is *The Key Comprehension Routine*?

- What are the components of *The Key Comprehension Routine, Primary Grades*? (p.4)
- Describe who is receiving professional development for this program in your school or district. Will a sufficient number of teachers use the program to provide consistency as students move from grade to grade?
- Review the *Instructional Continuum* on pages 6-7. Do you think the suggestions are appropriate for the grade level(s) you teach?
- Make a list of the literacy state standards that will be your focus as you use *The Key Comprehension Routine*.
- Give an example from your teaching where you have used the *Gradual Release of Responsibility* model.

Chapter 2: Effective Comprehension Instruction

- Describe the “simple view” of reading comprehension (p. 17) and explain the relationship between listening and reading comprehension skills.
- If a student has weak decoding and fluency skills, how might this affect his reading comprehension?
- If a student’s vocabulary knowledge is insufficient for his grade level, how might this affect his reading comprehension?
- What evidence is there that comprehension strategies can and should be taught starting in the primary grades? (p. 20).
- Based on your experience, do you agree with this quote from Dewitz and colleagues based on their analysis of comprehension in widely used core reading programs: “*Core reading programs recommend teaching many more skills and strategies than the researchers recommend and may dilute the emphasis on critical skills and strategies. In addition, comprehension strategy instruction does not meet those guidelines of explicit instruction as recommended in a number of research studies. Rarely do the five core programs follow the gradual-release-of-responsibility model nor do the programs provide the amount of practice for skills and strategies that were employed in original research studies.*” Explain why or why not.
- Summarize to a colleague the five major recommendations from the IES Practice Guide listed in Figure C.

- Complete Activity 1 and share your response with colleagues.
- List the six strategies that have been found to improve comprehension for children in grades K-3.
- Describe some of the factors that can affect reading comprehension.
- Describe any professional development you have participated in that is related to comprehension instruction. In what way did it affect your teaching?

Chapter 3: The Connection Between Oral Language and Comprehension

- Summarize the findings of the Hart and Risley studies. What implication do you think this has for the students you teach?
- Complete Activities 1 and 2 and share your response with colleagues.
- Describe some ways that you provide a rich language environment for your students. Include examples of precise language that are listed on p. 43-44.

Part II

Chapter 4: Text Structure

- Has the emphasis in the Common Core State Standards on increasing the use of more challenging narrative and expository text in primary grades affected how you teach reading in your classroom?
- Summarize the basic elements of narrative text. Do you use a graphic organizer such as the ones in Figures B through G to help students learn about these elements?
- Describe some of the challenges facing primary grade children with expository text. Do you use any of the graphic organizers such as the ones in Figure H to help children learn about these structures?
- Review the information about sentence structure and then complete Activities 1 and 2.
- Describe your students' knowledge of paragraph structure.
- Complete Activities 3 and 4 and share your response with colleagues.

Chapter 5: Categorizing and Main Idea Skills

- List some terms that are associated with main idea skills. Do you use any other terms?
- Complete Activity 1 and share your response with colleagues.
- Take turns with a partner explaining the three techniques for finding the main idea (i.e., *Goldilocks*, *Label the Bucket*, *Self-Cuing*).
- Can you use the classroom activities suggested in Figure D related to the *Label the Bucket* technique? If not, how can you adapt them to do so?
- Complete Activity 2 and share your response with colleagues.
- Take a look at Figure E on p. 83. Why do you think it identifies categorizing as the easiest level of main idea skills?
- Complete Activities 3, 4, and 5. Then share your response with colleagues.
- Explain why a paragraph with an implied main idea might be more difficult to comprehend than a paragraph with a stated main idea.
- Complete Activities 6, 7 and 8. Then share your response with colleagues.
- Do you think the scaffolding suggestions provided on pages 98-99 would be helpful for your students?

Chapter 6: Modeling the Routine with Think Aloud, Read Aloud, and Text Discussion

- Describe to a colleague an example of a time you used think aloud to teach a comprehension skill or strategy.
- Read the Carlisle and Rice summary about the benefits of reading aloud in kindergarten and grade 1 (p. 109). Then make a list of the benefits.

- Review the list in Figure A of before, during, and after elements that contribute to effective read aloud. Place a check mark next to elements that you use on a regular basis. Then underline a few elements that you would like to use more often.
- Do you think the questions in Figures B and C (from *Questioning the Author* and *Text Talk*) would be helpful to support text discussion in your classroom? Can you suggest some additional questions?
- Review the chart in Figure D. Describe to a colleague the range of questions you ask your students using the NAEP and Bloom’s Taxonomy question levels.

PART IV

Activity 1: Top-Down Topic Web

- Make a list of graphic organizers you use on a regular basis with students.
- Do you agree with this statement by the author: *“However, the availability of so many different types of graphic organizers often causes confusion about when and how to use them. As students move from grade to grade and encounter many kinds of graphic organizers, they become overwhelmed and tend to focus more on figuring out how to use each new template instead of how to independently use one or two to master content material.”*
- How would you best describe a top-down topic web and why visual elements such as shape, color and position are important? Answer the questions in Activity 1 on p. 120.
- Complete Activity 2. Share your introductory lesson with a colleague.
- Generate a top-down topic web that can be used with narrative or informational text you use in your classroom. Then explain to a colleague how you will use it before, during, and after the text is read.
- Generate a top-down topic web that represents the content information you will be covering during a classroom lesson or unit of study. Explain why it would be helpful for students to see this web before and during instruction about this topic.
- What is a sub-web and when might it be useful to use one?
- Summarize the suggestions for scaffolding top-down topic webs.

Activity 2: Two-Column Notes

- How would you best describe to students the format of two-column notes?
- On p. 139, the author describes some advantages that the two-column format has over traditional outlining for taking notes. Do you agree or disagree?
- Why are main idea skills essential to teaching students how to organize information into two-column notes?
- Describe the difference between how a kindergarten or grade 1 teacher might use two-column notes with students compared to how a grade 2 or 3 teacher might use them.
- Generate a sample set of notes based on narrative or informational text used in your classroom.
- Pick two vocabulary terms that are essential for students to learn. Develop a two-column entry for each term.
- Generate a sample set of notes that can be used to gather information for a simple research activity.

Activity 3: Summary

- Explain how a *summary* is different from a *retell*.
- Can you use the suggestions for retelling that are provided on p. 154 and the prompts provided in Figure A in your classroom? If not, how can you adapt them to do so?
- Complete Activity 1. Share your response with colleagues.
- Review the summary steps in Figure D. Do you think this set of steps might be helpful for your students? If so, think of a way you can make this list accessible to students in your classroom.

- Why is it important for students to have strong main idea skills in order to generate good summaries?
- Explain to a colleague why summary writing is difficult for students. What sub-skills must be integrated?
- Do your students use grade-appropriate transition words and phrases when they write? Can you use the list of transitions in Figure E in your classroom? If not, how could you adapt it so you could?
- Can you use the summary template shown in Figure G in your classroom? If not, how could you adapt it so you could?
- Explain how a top-down topic web or a set of two-column notes can be used to generate a summary.
- Complete Activity 3 and share your response with colleagues.

Activity 4: Question Generation

- Look over the information on pages 169-170 about question generation. Explain in your own words why teaching students to generate and answer questions can be a powerful comprehension strategy.
- What are the six levels of thinking that make up Bloom's Taxonomy? Do you incorporate Bloom's Taxonomy in some way in your teaching?
- Review the question terms in Figure C. Identify and circle 5 essential question terms that you will teach students as soon as possible.
- Can you use the list of terms in Figure C and the list of question prompts in Figure D in your classroom? If not, how could you adapt them so you could?
- Review the recommended scope and sequence for introducing and practicing question generation on p. 176. Do you agree with this order?
- Complete Activities 2 and 3 and share your response with colleagues.
- Describe how you might use or modify one of the examples on pages 179-180 for using visuals or manipulatives to teach questioning at different levels of thinking.
- Explain how a top-down topic web or a set of two-column notes can be used as the basis for question generation. Then complete Activity 4 and share your response with colleagues.
- Identify a reading selection and generate one question at every level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Part IV

Chapter 7: Combining Activities

- Explain to a colleague what the arrows in Figure A represent. How are the four strategy activities connected?
- Review the four examples of the application of the routine on pages 189-197. Then think of how you might combine a top-down topic web, two-column notes, summary, and question generation to content reading material you use in your classroom.

Chapter 8: Implementing the Routine Across a School

- What are your school's or district's expectations regarding comprehension strategy instruction in the primary grades?
- Is the information in this chapter useful to your situation?

Review Activities

- Complete Parts 1 and 2 and share your response with colleagues.
- Which of the teaching practices from this book are already areas of strength for you as a teacher? In which area(s) do you intend to grow?
- What is the most practical take away that you will implement in your classroom as soon as possible?

