



# Effective Grammar School Teaching & Leadership

with Lori Jill Keeler

## Lesson 8: Teaching Reading in the Grammar School (Part 1)

### Outline:

#### More Effective Reading Instruction (Part 1)

#### Best Practices in Reading Instruction:

- Every marine is a rifleman; it is a basic and essential skill.
- Every teacher is a reading instructor.
- Reading is the bedrock subject for all the other subjects we teach (even in math and science).
- What are the building blocks of reading?



#### Decoding and Encoding

- Two ways students learn to read: Decoding and Encoding (Comprehension).

Reading	
Decoding (Alphabetic Principle)	Comprehension/Encoding (Meaning)
Phonemic Awareness	Vocabulary and Linguistic Knowledge
Phonics	Text Comprehension
Fluency	
Emphasis in K-1	Emphasis in upper elementary grades

- Decoding
  - There should be a heavy focus on phonics approach to learning to read.
  - We teach the relationship between graphics (letters) and phonemes (sounds).
- Encoding
  - Encoding is when students can attach meaning to the sounds and words.
  - There are correlations between decoding well and encoding well.



- The Brain
  - The brain has limited space for working memory/thinking. If students spend too much time decoding they won't have enough working memory to encode or attach meaning to words they are decoding.

## Fluency Instruction

Fluency Instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fluency is the ability to read a text orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fluency bridges the gap between word recognition and comprehension.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fluency bridges the gap between word recognition and comprehension.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Guided oral reading: shared reading, student-adult reading, tape-assisted reading, choral reading, partner or paired reading, reader's theater (no evidence that round-robin reading is effective)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Independent silent reading</li></ul>

- Because fluent readers don't need to spend as much time decoding words, their brains are free to focus on the meaning of words. Eventually word recognition and comprehension occur almost simultaneously. We need to give students ample time to practice fluency. There should be much reading aloud; parents should ensure students are reading at least 30 minutes today (to increase vocabulary, fluency, background knowledge which will all increase comprehension).
- Sustained silent reading: When students first come to school or when they have finished with their work, have them engage in silent reading. There should always be a book available.
- If a student reads 20 minutes a day, that will amount to ~2,000,000 words in a year.
- Beginning with 2nd grade, the focus should shift from decoding to encoding/comprehension.



Comprehension: Strategies that Work

<b>Strategy Instruction</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk about strategies with students explicitly.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name and describe each strategy.</li><li>• Model how each strategy is being used by thinking aloud (for students) while performing tasks relevant to students.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide students with multiple opportunities to use the strategies with a variety of materials.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide feedback and guidance while students refine and internalize the use of each strategy.</li></ul>

Various Strategies

- **Metacognition** is comprehension monitoring, thinking about your thinking.

<b>Strategy: Comprehension Monitoring</b>
Help students to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify where the difficulty occurs.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify what the difficulty is.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restate the difficult passage in their own words.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look back through the text to find information to help resolve the difficulty.</li></ul>

- Don't let kids slip over an unfamiliar word or confusion about words with dual meanings like "bank."
- Students need to learn to think about their reading while they are reading; this will help them to know when to read a difficult book more slowly, for example.

<b>Strategy: Using Graphic and Semantic Organizers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use a Story Map (plot exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution) or Character Web</li></ul>



<b>Strategy: Answering Questions</b>
• Give students a purpose for reading.
• Focus the student's attention on what they are to learn.
• Help students interact with what they read.
• Encourage students to monitor their comprehension.
• Help students relate what they are learning to what they already know.

- Good teacher questions will help students to answer questions that are text explicit (which are answered in the text) and text implicit (which require students to infer from what is in the text something that is outside the text).
- A teacher may record guided reading questions ahead of time or ask questions while students are reading.
- Help students to think about the text through a biblical lens.

### Generating Questions

- Help students to generate their own questions. Teaching students to ask their own questions will help them become aware of whether or not they understand what they are reading.
- Is this person a good person or a bad person?
- Good readers are always asking questions, and we must train students to do this.

### Grammar of Literature

- The grammar of literature is the building blocks or elements of a story.

<b>Importance of Knowing the Building Blocks of Literature by Means of These Skills:</b>
• Understanding different aspects of plot (stages, conflicts, etc.)
• Understanding characterization (types, methods, etc.)
• Identifying theme
• Identifying setting
• Identifying point of view

- Learning these elements is helpful for acquiring writing skills as well.

### Summarizing

<b>Strategy: Summarizing</b>
• Identifying main ideas
• Connecting them to each other
• Eliminating unnecessary information
• Eliminating unnecessary information



- Have students write a one to two sentence summary at the bottom of the page.

## Mental Imagery and Visualization

<b>Strategy: Mental Imagery</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Readers who form mental pictures during the reading understand and remember what they read better than readers who do not visualize.</li></ul> |
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- Encourage parents to ask their children while they are reading. “What do you see?” Media saturation today seems to be inhibiting students’ ability to visualize while reading.
  - Ask students to draw pictures. Helpful when students read descriptive passages. Have students draw a plot line in cartoon form.

## Activating Background Knowledge

<b>Strategy: Activating Background Knowledge</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Text-to-Text</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Text-to-Self</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Text-to-World</li></ul> |
- Text to Text: Compare Huck Finn’s character across Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn; compare King Ahab (in 1 Kings) to Macbeth. Ask, what can you compare this to?
  - Text to Self: What things in students’ own lives can they relate to the book? Ask, what would you have done if that were you? Encourage students to experience vicariously by reading literature.
  - Text to World: Ask, how does the book relate to what you know in the world?

## Making Inferences

<b>Strategy: Making Inferences</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Previewing</li></ul>                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contextualizing</li></ul>                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Questioning to Understand and Remember</li></ul>         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Challenges to the Students’ Beliefs and Values</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluating an Argument</li></ul>                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outlining and Summarizing</li></ul>                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comparing and Contrasting</li></ul>                      |



- Encourage students to write comments and arrows in the marginalia. Leave “footprints” in the text.

## Preparing Students to Read Complex Texts

- Use “pre-complex” text to prepare students for reading complex texts later in the upper school.
- Use books that include some vocabulary that is out of common use, because the books they will read later will have this vocabulary.
- Cf. *The Door in the Wall*; books by C.S. Lewis.
- “It is unrealistic to expect that students will be able to read those more difficult texts unless they have practiced reading older texts in a steady, continuous, intentional, and incremental way in the grammar stage.”
- Give students books that have a non-linear time sequence (cf. *Alice in Wonderland*; compare Newberry Award books with a non-linear sequence like *Holes* and *Moon over Manifest*).
- Complexity of Narrator: give students with samples of this too. Compare *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*.
- Complexity of Story: Read some books with complexity of story.
- Give students books that are just a little bit beyond their reading comprehension level.

## Text Choice

- Give them books in the “zone of proximal development.” Give students books with “just enough challenge and just enough comfort.” Don’t give them “too challenging texts too early.” But don’t give them books that are too easy.
- You can use Lexile scores, but Lori Jill recommends using these in conjunction with other data points as well.
- Choose books that build background knowledge and integrate with other subjects.
- Choose books that have some degree in the “canon of children’s literature” – books like *Charlotte’s Web* and *Little House on the Prairie*.

## Reading Achievement Levels

- Basic
- Proficient: Student can demonstrate an overall understanding of the text, providing both inferential as well as right-there information about it
- Advanced: Student is able to read well beyond grade level

## Conclusion: Combining Good Reading with the Love of Story

- The above strategies will help students to acquire the tools of reading; while they involve techniques they need not turn us into technicians.
- We avoid become mere “reading technicians” by imparting to students the love of story.