Transforming Literacy Teaching: Powerful Strategies for Meeting Common Core Standards

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A Portrait of a Learner Who Meets the Common Core Standards

• Becomes a self-directed, independent learner
• Builds strong content area knowledge
• Adjusts communication based on audience, task, purpose, and content
• Comprehends as well as critiques
• Seeks to understand other perspectives and cultures
• Evaluates other points of view critically and constructively
• Values evidence
• Uses technology and digital media strategically and capably

*Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010), p. 7*
Transforming Teaching: Read Aloud and Promote Books

What the Common Core Standards Say About Reading Aloud

"By reading a story or nonfiction selection aloud, teachers allow children to experience written language without the burden of decoding, granting them access to the content that they may not be able to read and understand by themselves. Children are then free to focus their mental energy on the words and ideas presented in the text, and they will eventually be better prepared to tackle rich written content on their own" (CCSS, p. 27).

A Few of My Favorite Read Alouds

Do your students sneeze and cough all over the classroom? If so, then this book is perfect for them! Watch your kids' faces as you read about Sick Simon's "best week ever!" The illustrations are disgusting, but they get the point across.

Teaching Ideas: Science—Healthy Body

This amusing story, told all in speech bubbles, is about self-acceptance. A small frog is convinced he no longer wants to be a frog, but his wise father and a hungry wolf set him straight.

Teaching Ideas: Read Like a Writer—Speech Bubbles; Pair with *The Mixed-Up Chameleon* (Carle, 1975)

The "Going Places" contest is underway and Rafael wants to win. So, he builds his go-cart to the exact specifications. Then, he notices that Maya has taken a different approach. Together, they create their own unique vehicle.

Teaching Ideas: Beginning of the Year; Inferring Big Ideas (See Mini-Lesson in M-by-M Reading p. 186)

Note about Teaching Ideas References:
TLT = *Transforming Literacy Teaching in the Era of Higher Standards* (Walther, 2015)
M-by-M Reading = *Month-by-Month Reading for the Differentiated Classroom* (Walther & Phillips, 2012)
M-by-M Writing = *Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction* (Walther & Phillips, 2009)
Poetry = *Teaching Struggling Readers With Poetry* (Walther & Fuhler, 2010)
L. I. B. = *Literature Is Back!* (Fuhler & Walther, 2007)

Promoting Books in the Intermediate Grades and Beyond

• Teacher Book Talks
• Student Book Commercials
• Book Teasers—Read the First Chapter
• Book Trailers—BLOG: *Watch. Connect. Read. Exploring Children's Literature through Book Trailers* [http://mrschureads.blogspot.com](http://mrschureads.blogspot.com) Twitter @MrSchuReads

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Transforming Teaching: Engage in Collaborative Conversations

What the Common Core Standards Say About Comprehension Conversations

"Children in the early grades—particularly kindergarten through grade 3—benefit from participating in rich, structured conversations with an adult in response to written texts that are read aloud, orally and comparing and contrasting as well as analyzing and synthesizing" (CCSS, p. 27).

Source: Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom (Walther & Phillips, 2012)

Inferring Big Ideas

A sweet story about a horsefly and honeybee that decide to nap in the same flower, have a fight, and each lose a wing. Later, when the bullfrog wants to eat them, they work together to fly away.

Teaching Ideas: Comprehension Conversations—Inferring Big Ideas (K), Social Studies—Friendship, Teamwork

Cupcake-loving Little Elliot is different in many ways and this makes living in the city a bit challenging. Then, he meets a mouse that is having bigger problems. Together, they tackle their problems and soon become friends.

Teaching Ideas: Inferring Big Ideas in K—friendship, working together; Pair with *Horsefly and Honeybee* (Cecil, 2012)

Feeling alone in a world of periods, the exclamation mark tries everything to fit in and is about to give up when he meets the question mark. Question mark helps him discover his unique talent—exclaiming!

Teaching Ideas: Inferring Big Ideas—Accepting Differences

Chloe learns a life lesson when her teacher points out the power of kindness. After this compelling lesson, Chloe wishes she would have shown kindness to the new girl, Maya, instead ignoring her because she was less fortunate and different. Unfortunately, Chloe never gets the chance to show kindness because Maya moves away.

Teaching Ideas: Comprehension Conversations—Inferring Big Ideas; Social Studies—accepting differences, friendship.


Ten-year old Auggie Pullman, who was born with extreme facial abnormalities and was not expected to survive, goes from being home-schooled to entering fifth grade at a private middle school in Manhattan, which entails enduring the taunting and fear of his classmates as he struggles to be seen as just another student (Library of Congress).

Asking and Answering Questions Helps Readers Infer

Based on an ancient Persian poem, "Parrot and the Merchant" by Rumi, this is a tale of a wealthy merchant who keeps a parrot in his shop to attract customers. When he asks the parrot what he wants from India, the parrot requests that the merchant tell his wild bird friends about him and their secret message leads to his freedom.

Teaching Ideas: Comprehension Conversation—Predicting (*M-by-M Reading* p. 121) or Questioning (*M-by-M Reading* p. 172); Multicultural Literature
Transforming Teaching: Read Aloud Like a Writer

Reading aloud IS teaching writing, even if no writing activity follows the reading.
Vicki Spandel, Creating Young Writers (2008)

READ LIKE A WRITER: COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATIONS

Turn and Talk Teaching Tips:
Before you begin, model “turn and talk” with another adult or student. Emphasize the importance of having a two-way conversation with one person speaking at a time. Assign students a “turn and talk” partner or small group.

During read aloud, stop several times at natural breaking points and pose the following queries for students to “turn and talk” about:

- Where do you think this author got his/her ideas for this book?
- Listen to this! Let me reread the beginning of this book. Did the lead make you want to read the story?
- Did you hear any words that you want to remember and use in your writing?
- Can you picture this setting/character/event in your mind? How did the author help you do that? What words did he or she use?
- Notice the way the sentences flow. Talk about how the author did that.
- Does this writing have voice?
- Who is telling this story? How do you know that?


We need to marinate students in literature so that, over time, it soaks into their consciousness and, eventually, into their writing.
Ralph Fletcher, Roots and Wings: Literature and Children’s Writing (1993)
What to look for . . .

- Various Text Structures
- Sensory Language
- Creative Conventions
- Repetition
- Word Play
- Onomatopoeia
- Interjections
- Illustration Techniques

What to say . . .

*Source: Choice Words by Peter H. Johnston (Stenhouse, 2004)*

- “Oh, I love that line!”
- “Did anyone notice
  *any interesting words?*
  *any new punctuation?*
  *any new ways of arranging
  the words on the page?*
- “Are there any favorite words or phrases, or ones you wish you had written?”
- “Why would an author do something like that?” “How else could the author have done that?”
- “Why did the author choose that word?”

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**A Few of My Favorite Mentor Texts for Narrative Writing**

**CCSS Writing Standard 3**


When Bella takes her dog for a “stroll across the page,” he disappears into the gutter of the book along with her friend, the rescue squad, and Bella herself. Quick-thinking Bella writes a note to the readers asking them to shake the book and get everyone out.

**Teaching Ideas:** Parts of a Book—gutter (See morning message in M-by-M Reading p. 40); Reading—Writing Connection


“This is rat law: Cheese belongs to you.” Unless a gang of big, quick, strong, scary, hairy, dirty rats wants it. Filled with adjectives, this book is sure to inspire your writers!

**Teaching Ideas:** Read Like a Writer (Video clip found in T. L. T); Grammar—Adjectives


Begin reading this boldly illustrated picture book on the front flap and continue to read, notice, and laugh at the young narrator’s adventures as he narrowly escapes a tiger again and again!

**Teaching Ideas:** Read Like a Writer
Transforming Teaching: Guide Readers

The Three Steps to Effective Guided Reading Lessons

- Pinpoint an instructional focus
- Select an appropriate text that is slightly challenging
- Determine which teaching points will scaffold readers so they can take the next step in becoming more independent

Pinpoint an Instructional Focus

Monitoring—First and foremost, if the reader is not monitoring for meaning, we scaffold, prompt, and teach this foundational skill.
Decoding—If the reader stops at a tricky word, then we prompt for decoding strategies and reinforce decoding as a teaching point.
Fluency—Fluency comes next because once a reader develops automaticity with words and decoding, he or she is ready to be prompted for fluency.
Vocabulary—It is common for skilled decoders to plow right through unknown words, decode them accurately, but not use the context clues to figure out the meaning of the word. Scaffolding vocabulary is an ideal teaching point for transitional and fluent readers!
Comprehension—Comprehension appears last in the sequence because it is the goal of every guided reading lesson and the previous scaffolds and teaching points will support the readers’ understanding of the text.

Match the Text to Your Instructional Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Text Features</th>
<th>A Few of My Favorites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>Some challenging words to decode</td>
<td>Scholastic Guided Science Readers (Levels A-D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Dialogue, few decoding challenges</td>
<td>Elephant and Piggie, Fly Guy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Unfamiliar words with text or illustration clues</td>
<td>Scholastic Vocabulary Readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retell</td>
<td>Straightforward storyline, supportive illustrations</td>
<td>Frog’s Lunch by Dee Lillegard, My Lucky Day by Keiko Kasza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Idea</td>
<td>Informational texts with supportive text features</td>
<td>Critters in Camouflage by Karen Alexander, Hibernation by Tori Kasara both from Scholastic Common Core Text Sets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infer</td>
<td>Fables, short stories, poetry, texts with surprises</td>
<td>Fables by Arnold Lobel, Teaching Struggling Readers With Poetry (Walther &amp; Fuhler, 2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scaffold, Prompt, Teach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Sample Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>Reread and think about what would make sense and begins with that letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>Get your mouth ready to say the first sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Reread it the way the character would say it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Look at the picture/text feature to help you better understand that word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retell</td>
<td>Tell me about what you just read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Idea</td>
<td>What are the key ideas the author wanted you to learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infer</td>
<td>How do you think the character feels about _____? What evidence/clues helped you to figure that out?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Next Step Guided Reading Assessment (Richardson & Walther, 2013)
Transforming Teaching: Provide Ample Time to Read Independently

Why is it ESSENTIAL to guide children in choosing “just right” books—95% accuracy or better?

- Increases **engagement** and **on-task behavior** during independent reading time.
- Expands **vocabulary** because independent reading is the source of most vocabulary acquisition.
- Strengthens **self-monitoring** and the use of **decoding strategies**.
- Improves **comprehension** because children can read and think at the same time.
- Fosters **reading success** because enjoyment of texts is a critical factor in becoming a passionate, lifelong reader.


### A Few of My Favorite Graphic Novel Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Series/Publisher</th>
<th>Title, Author, Brief Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babymouse/Random House</td>
<td><em>Babymouse #13: Cupcake Tycoon</em> (Holm, 2010) Babymouse is determined to raise the most money and win the grand prize in the school library fundraiser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Pig Pet Shop Private Eye/Graphic Universe/Lerner</td>
<td><em>The Ferret's a Foot</em> (Venable, C. AF, 2011) In the third book of this series, Sasspants and her sidekick Hamisher are trying to solve another pet shop mystery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics Comics/Innovative Kids</td>
<td><em>Teeny Genie</em> (Katschke, 2009) The Teeny Genie is helping kids who need him with one wacky wish after another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toon Books/Toon Books</td>
<td><em>Stinky</em> (Davis, 2008) Stinky and his pet Wartbelly enjoy their smelly days in the swamp until a kid comes along. Will Stinky and the kid become friends?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom* (Walther & Phillips, 2012)
## Transforming Teaching: Infuse Informational Text

Pair and Compare Fiction and Informational Texts

**CCSS RL5.1** Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FICTION</th>
<th>INFORMATIONAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANIMALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>ANIMALS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Big (Graves, 2010)</td>
<td>The Chicken or the Egg (Fowler, 1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Perfect Nest (Friend, 2007)</td>
<td>Chickens Aren’t the Only Ones (Heller, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shark vs. Train (Barton, 2010)</td>
<td>Let’s Look at Sharks (Nelson, 2010)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BUGS</strong></th>
<th><strong>BUGS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaaaarggh! Spider (Monks, 2004)</td>
<td>Nic Bishop Spiders (Bishop, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insects are My Life (McDonald, 1995)</td>
<td>Bugs are Insects (Rockwell, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velma Gratch and the Way Cool Butterfly (Madison, 2007)</td>
<td>From Caterpillar to Butterfly (Heiligman, 1996)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>FALL</strong></th>
<th><strong>FALL</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bats at the Library (Lies, 2008)</td>
<td>Zipping, Zapping, Zooming Bats (Earle, 1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Biggest Pumpkin Ever (Kroll, 1987)</td>
<td>It’s Pumpkin Time (Hall, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Little Yellow Leaf (Berger, 2008)</td>
<td>Why Do Leaves Change Colors (Maestro, 1994)</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>WEATHER</strong></th>
<th><strong>WEATHER</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cloudette (Lichtenheld, 2011)</td>
<td>Clouds (Rockwell, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>See M-by-M Reading p. 206 for Comprehension Conversation</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rain Came Down (Shannon, 2000)</td>
<td>Down Comes the Rain (Branley, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wind Blew (Hutchins, 1974)</td>
<td>Can You See the Wind (Fowler, 1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See M-by-M Reading p. 119 for Mini-Lesson*

*See M-by-M Reading p. 210 for Three Read-Aloud Words*

Questions to Spark Conversations or Responses to Reading:
- Who are the authors and illustrators of each text? What is their job?
- How are these two texts the same? How are they different?
- What was the author’s purpose for writing each text?
- Why do you think he or she chose this particular approach to the topic?
- Which text did you prefer? Why? Does anyone have a different opinion?
- How can you use what you've learned from reading and thinking about these texts in your own writing?

Informational Text Questions
- What did you learn from the pictures/illustrations and what did you learn from the words?
- What question(s) did the author want to answer? What did he or she explain or describe?

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Transforming Teaching: Discover Connections

This is one of the biographies in the "Ordinary People Change the World" series. These books are ideal for young readers because they are told in an engaging manner that connects with children, while also clearly illustrating the lasting importance of the accomplishments of each individual.

**Teaching Ideas:** Writing Genres—Biography (For more information on writing a biography see M-by-M Writing p. 124 & M-by-M Reading Chapter 6); Social Studies—Inspiring Individuals (For more books & ideas see M-by-M Reading Chapter 6)

Bunting's carefully crafted, poetic text captures the mood of the country the day "the humble cart" carried Dr. King's body through Atlanta in April, 1968.

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—Black History: Pair with *Rosa's Bus: The Ride to Civil Rights* (Kittinger, 2010) or *Abraham Lincoln Comes Home* (Burleigh, 2008) about Lincoln's funeral train to discuss historical events told from unique perspectives.

You can almost hear their footsteps in the rhythm of McGinty's words as you travel with Gandhi and his fellow protestors on their March to the Sea. Create a text set with books about other peaceful protests like *We March* (Evans, 2012), *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Johnson, 2007), *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* (Weatherford, 2007).

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—Inspiring Individuals (For more books & ideas see M-by-M Reading Chapter 6)

A Few Professional Books That Have Shaped My Thinking


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