

Building Comprehension in Struggling Readers

Teaching Every Child to Read



Readiness

Word Recognition

Comprehension

Assessment

School Change

Professional Learning

Learning Disabilities

Volunteers

Second Language Learners

Literacy Rich Text Environment

Readiness—Teachers:

- Engage children in extended conversations
- Encourage children to tell and retell stories and describe events
- Discuss a wide range of topics
- Ask open-ended questions
- Give explicit guidance on vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation
- Encourage language play
- Challenge children to justify their thinking
- Focus on expressing ideas

Developing Word Recognition and Spelling Growth

Stage	Word Recognition	Spelling
Visual Cues	Child recognizes words through distinctive features like the “tail” on <i>monkey</i>	Child spells with scribbles, pictures, or random letters.
Partial alphabetic use	Child recognizes words by first or last letter.	Child spells words with first or last letters or both, such as <i>grl</i> for <i>girl</i> .
Full alphabetic use	Child sounds out words using both vowels and consonants.	Child uses vowels in spelling, although not always correctly, such as <i>lat</i> for <i>late</i> .
Automaticity and advanced concepts	Child decodes most words automatically, using phonograms and analogies.	Child learns about consonant doubling, suffixes, and other complex aspects of spelling.

Steve Stahl

Assessing literacy skills and knowledge

Grade	Pre-K	K	1	2	3
Letter identification; letter-sound correspondence	X	X	X		
Oral language and listening	X	X	X		
Concepts about print	X	X	X		
Phonological awareness		X	X		
Decoding and word recognition		X	X	X	X
Comprehension and retelling		X	X	X	X
Oral reading rate and fluency			X	X	X
Attitudes about reading				X	X
Reading habits and interests				X	X

Comprehensive Literacy

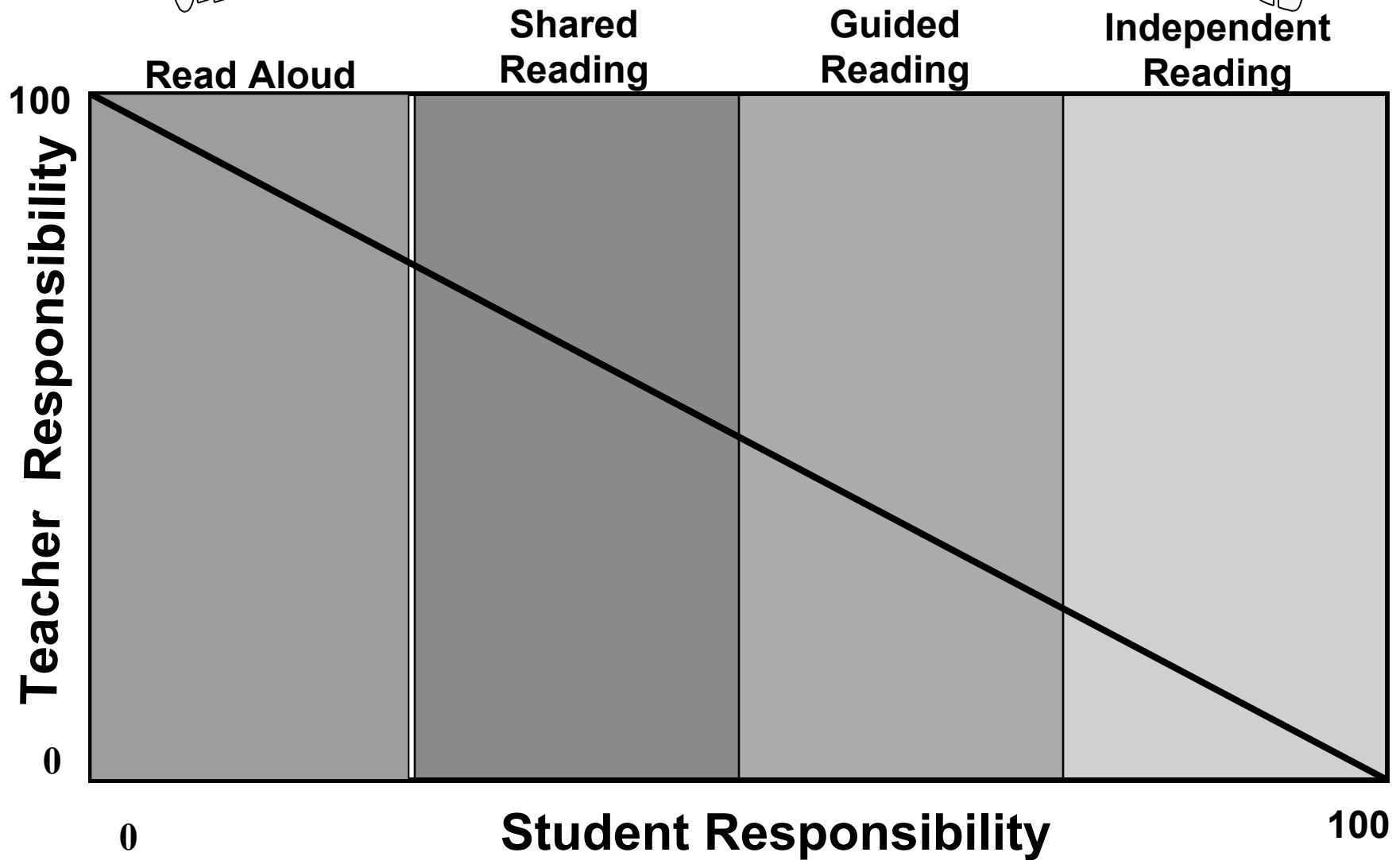
- Oral Language—speaking and listening
 - Read Alouds
 - Retellings
 - Discussions
 - Book Clubs/Literacy Circles
- Fluency—word knowledge and vocabulary
 - Automaticity
 - Focus on constructing meaning
- Comprehension

Reading Comprehension Instruction for Struggling Readers

- Directed questioning.
- Explaining concepts and procedures fully.
- Controlling difficulty of task demands.
- Modeling steps and processes.
- Providing cues to prompt children to use appropriate strategies.
- Having children work in small groups.

Joanne Carlisle

GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY



Reader Attributes Which Affect Comprehension

- Prior Knowledge and Experience
- Attitudes Toward the Purpose
- Interests in the Topic
- Self Perceptions as a Learner

Small Group Instruction

- Ongoing assessment
- Guided instruction
- Responsive questioning

Role of Comprehension

- As independence increases, it becomes even more important to provide students with instruction in comprehension.
- Correlations between accuracy in reading words and comprehension and/or recall of text decrease with passage difficulty.

Comprehension comprises two skills:

- Word knowledge or vocabulary
- Reasoning

Schemata

- Provides a framework for assimilating new information.
- Helps readers focus their attention on what is important in the text.
- Allows readers to make inferences about information that is not explicit in the text.
- Allows for orderly searches of information stored in memory that are necessary to construct meaning.
- Makes it possible to summarize information by recognizing what is and is not important.
- Permits readers to make inferences to help decide what kind of information might fill a memory gap.

Components of Comprehension

- Vocabulary
- Self-Monitoring
- Individual Strategies
- Routines (integrated set of strategies)

Vocabulary occupies an important position in learning to read.

- For beginning readers, reading vocabulary encountered in texts is mapped onto the oral vocabulary the learner brings to the task.
- Readers learn to translate unfamiliar words in print into speech, with the expectation that the speech forms will be easier to comprehend.
- When a word is not in the learner's oral vocabulary, it will not be understood when it occurs in print.

Results of Vocabulary Instruction

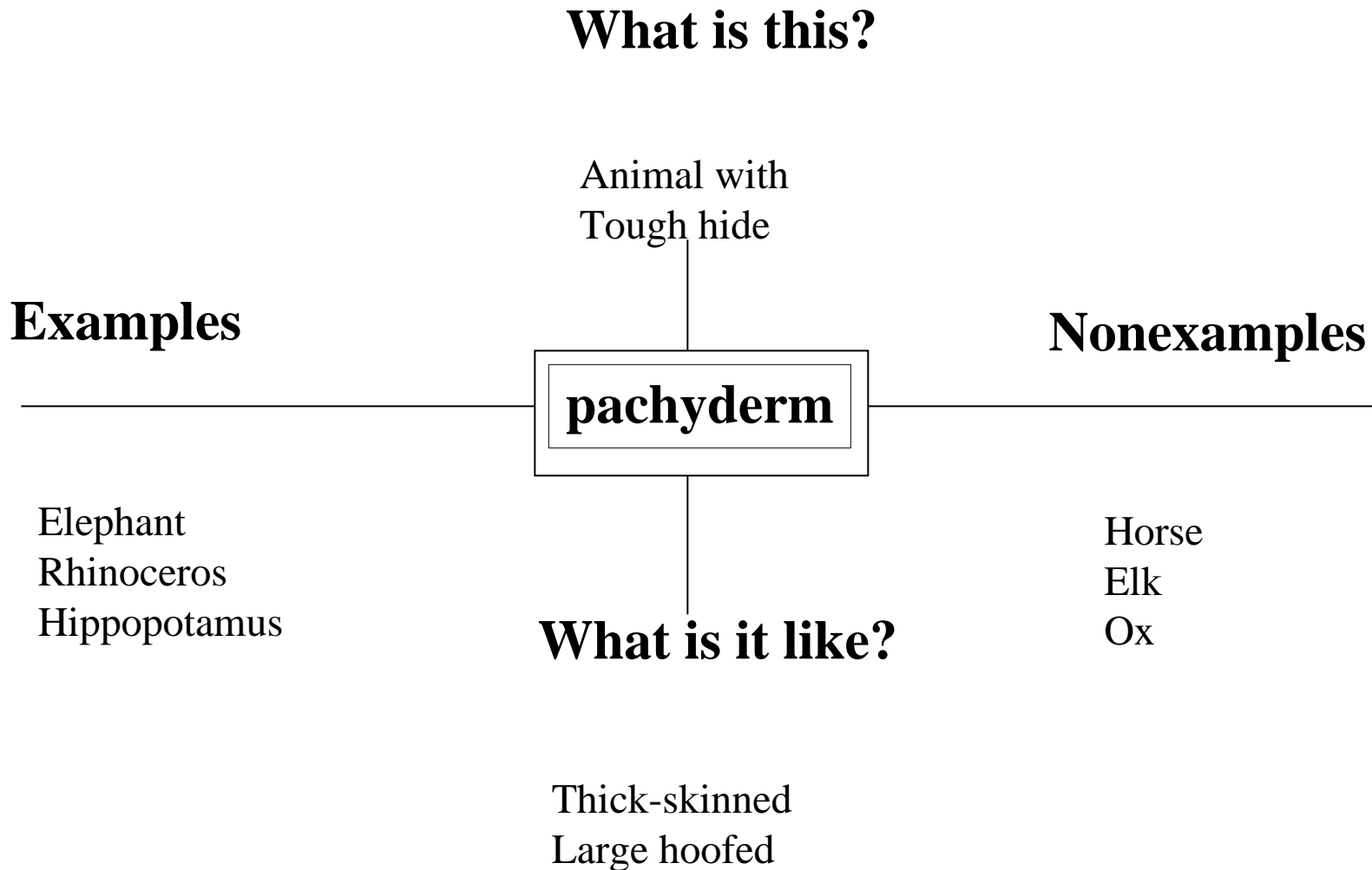
- Studying vocab results in gains in comprehension.
- Vocab can be learned incidentally in when children are read to and when they read independently.
- Repeated exposure to vocab is important for learning gains.
- Pre-instruction of vocab words before reading facilitates vocab acquisition and comprehension.

Word Pairs

	Same	Opposite	Go Together	No Relation
Desert/Nomad			XXX	
Nomad/Wanderer	XXX			
Nomad/Settler		XXX		
Desert/City				XXX
Star/Energy			XXX	

Word Power: What Every Educator Needs to Know about Teaching Vocabulary,
Stahl and Kapinus, 2001

Modified Frayer Model



Word Power: What Every Educator Needs to Know about Teaching Vocabulary,
Stahl and Kapinus, 2001

Comprehension is best supported by:

- Careful discussion of stories students read on their own or are read to by the teacher
- Wide reading—variety of texts, variety of genres, variety of topics, variety of purposes
- Explicit instruction in how to use strategies that help construct meaning

Accomplished Teachers' Approach to Comprehension Instruction

	Text-Based Questions	Higher Level Questions	Writing In Response To Reading
Most Accomplished Teachers	48%	31%	48%
Somewhat Accomplished Teachers	46%	8%	42%
Least Accomplished Teachers	24%	0%	18%

From Taylor et al, Beat the Odds Study

Instructional Model

- Explicit description of the strategy and when it should be used
- Teacher and/or student modeling of the strategy in action
- Collaborative use of the strategy in action
- Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility
- Independent use of the strategy

The most important comprehension strategies are:

- Summarizing texts (stories and descriptions)
- Finding the big ideas, themes
- Predicting events and outcomes
- Drawing inferences
- Linking new information to known information (prior knowledge)

Graphic Organizers

- The main effect of graphic organizers is to improve the reader's memory for the content that has been read.
- There are a variety of graphic organizers that can be used and they should be selected on the basis of
 - their “fit” to the text being read and
 - for the age level appropriateness for the reader.

Typical Graphic Organizers include:

- Story maps
- Concept maps
- Mind maps
- Cause/Effects maps
- Character Trait maps
- Plot maps

Reciprocal Teaching

Multiple Strategy Instruction

- Summarization
- Question generation
- Clarification
- Prediction

Organization

- Structured dialogue
- Small groups
- Teacher takes turns with students assuming the role of dialogue leader
- Taking turns, each student reads a paragraph and asks a clarifying question, asks a checking for understanding question, summarizes, and predicts.

Example of Reciprocal Teaching

Following script is from:

Using Reciprocal Teaching in the
Classroom: A Guide for Teachers

A. Palincsar, Y. David, & A. Brown,
1989

The pipefish change their color and movements to blend with their surroundings. For example, pipefish that live among green plants change their color to a shade of green to match the plants.

Clare: [Question] One question that I had about this paragraph is: What is special about the way that the pipefish looks?

Keith: Do you mean the way that it is green?

Andy: It's not just that it's green; it's that it's the same color as the plants around it, all around it.

Clare: [Summary] Yes. That's it. My summary is this part tells how the pipefish looks and that it looks like what is around it. [Prediction] My prediction is that this is about its enemies and how it protects itself and who the enemies are.

Monty: [Addition to summary] They also talked about how the pipefish moves.

Keith: It sways back and forth.

Andy: Along with the other plants.

Teacher: What do we call it when something looks like and acts like something else? The way that the walkingstick was yesterday? We clarified this word when we talked about the walkingstick.

Angel: Mimic.

Teacher: That's right. We said...we would say that the pipefish mimics the...

Students: Plants.

Teacher: Okay! Let's see if Clare's predictions come true.

SAIL

Transactional Strategies Instruction

- Emphasizes problem-solving
- Engages students in authentic reading
- Reflects on strategies created by both teacher and student
- Includes both cognitive and interpretive strategies.

SAIL Strategies

- Cognitive Strategies
 - Thinking aloud
 - Constructing images
 - Summarizing
 - Predicting
 - Questioning
 - Clarifying
 - Story grammar analysis
 - Text structure analysis
- Interpretive Strategies
 - Character development
 - Identifying themes
 - Reading for multiple meanings
 - Creating literal/figurative distinctions
 - Relating one text to another
 - Relating text to personal experience

SAIL: Modeling a Think Aloud

The following script is taken from:

“Balanced Comprehension Instruction:
Transactional Strategies Instruction”

R. Brown, P. B. El-Dinary, M. Pressley, 1996

Think Aloud

T: One day, well, I, let's see, the title's the "Mushroom in the Rain." I know what mushrooms are because we've been studying plants, and we saw a filmstrip just the day before yesterday.

(She pauses and then reads the first page.)

T: Well, I know what a clearing is, it's where, in the woods, where they've taken down a lot of trees, or it's an open space where there aren't a lot of tall bushes and trees and things like that. Well, I guess for an ant, though, that could be pretty small. I'm visualizing a clearing as a ...big place without trees. But I'll bet a clearing for a little tiny ant would just be a place where there are maybe bits of leaves to make shadows, but just maybe,...grass growing around. And so he's looks for something to act sort of like a...

S: ...cover.

S: ...umbrella.

T: ...like an umbrella, like an umbrella, to keep him, to keep him dry until the rain stops.

(She continued to read: “He sat there waiting for the rain to stop, but the rain came down and came down.”)

T: You know, that’s happened to me, what I’m picturing. I’m visualizing when I was stranded here at school, without my car, with my bag of school papers to grade, waiting under the overhang, that was almost like my umbrella, waiting for the rain to slow down a little bit, so that I could walk home to my house. Gosh, sometimes it seems like forever till the rain stops. Has that ever happened to you?

Modeling: Personal Experiences Using a Strategy

T: Do you know what I do when I'm reading? I try, as I'm reading a novel, to make a picture in my mind of the events that are taking place. If the story takes place in the setting of a woods, I try to visualize the woods in my brain, and I try to visualize what's happening, and it helps me remember when I want to summarize, when I want to look back, and try to think what's happened so far. I try to think with my brain, but also use my visualizing strategy to picture, oh yes, this is what happened first, yes, this is what happened second, and that helps me remember.

Modeling: Scaffolding

T: How do you know which...[strategy] to pull out?...A carpenter doesn't pull out a hammer when he wants to screw in a screw...Now, as expert readers you have to make decisions about which strategy to use, which one will work. Do you want to make a prediction at the end of the story, necessarily? Do you want to use a fix-up strategy if you know all the words and you understand what the story's about? Do you want to visualize? If there's a picture right there and, gee, that's exactly what you're thinking is happening in the story, it looks just like what you're imagining? How do you know when to make a connection...[or]think aloud...How do you know?

T: What other strategy do we use? You've mentioned problem solving, or fix-up strategies, predicting, summarizing. There are two more that we've learned this year.

S: Think-aloud.

T: And what's that?

S: When you, uh, predict what's gonna happen next.

T: You might use think-aloud to make a prediction. How else do we use think-alouds?

S: Uh, when sometimes after you summarize you sometimes think aloud.

T: And what might you say when you're thinking aloud? Can you think of an example? We talk out loud when we summarize and we talk out loud when we predict, and we talk out loud, sometimes, when we're using those fix-up strategies, but when we think aloud, there's something else we can do.. And I'm gonna give you a little hint. It's about making...

S: Connections

Narrative Text Structure

- Setting
- Problem
- Goal
- Events/Action
- Outcomes
- Resolution
- Themes

Informational Text Structure

- Time order
- Enumeration
- Comparison/contrast
- Cause/effect
- Problem/Solution

Comparison/Contrast

Signal Words

however...but...as well as...similarity...on the other hand...not only...but also ...either ... or ... while...although...unless...except

Question frames

How are things alike?

What particular characteristics are similar?

How are they different?

What particular characteristics are different?

Concept/Definition

Signal Words

for example...specifically...as....which is...(e.g.)...for instance...such as...like

Question Frames

- What is the concept?
- What category does it belong to?
- What are its critical attributes?
- How does it work?
- What does it do?
- What are its functions?
- What are examples of it?

Cause-Effect

Signal Words

because...since...therefore...consequently...as a result...this led to...so...thus...for this reason...if...then

Question frames

- What is the effect or result?
- What are the causes?
- What are the factors that cause _____?
- Which ones are most important?
- How do the factors interrelate?

Comprehension Monitoring

Readers need to learn to monitor how well they comprehend. They need to have a variety of strategies under their control that can be used as “fix-up tools” to increase their understanding.

Comprehension Monitoring Behaviors

- Students can identify what it is that is causing them difficulty in understanding.
- Students look back in the text to try to solve a point of confusion.
- Students look forward in the text to try to solve a point of confusion.

Book Club Plus

Taffy Raphael

Susan Florio-Ruane

Organizing for the Week and the Day

Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Friday
Teacher Daily Readaloud				
Book Club	Book Club	Book Club	Literacy Block	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Opening community share •Reading •Writing •Book clubs •Closing community share 			Guided Reading Groups Skills Centers WWW searches Journaling Unit Work/ Writers Workshop	
Social Studies connection				

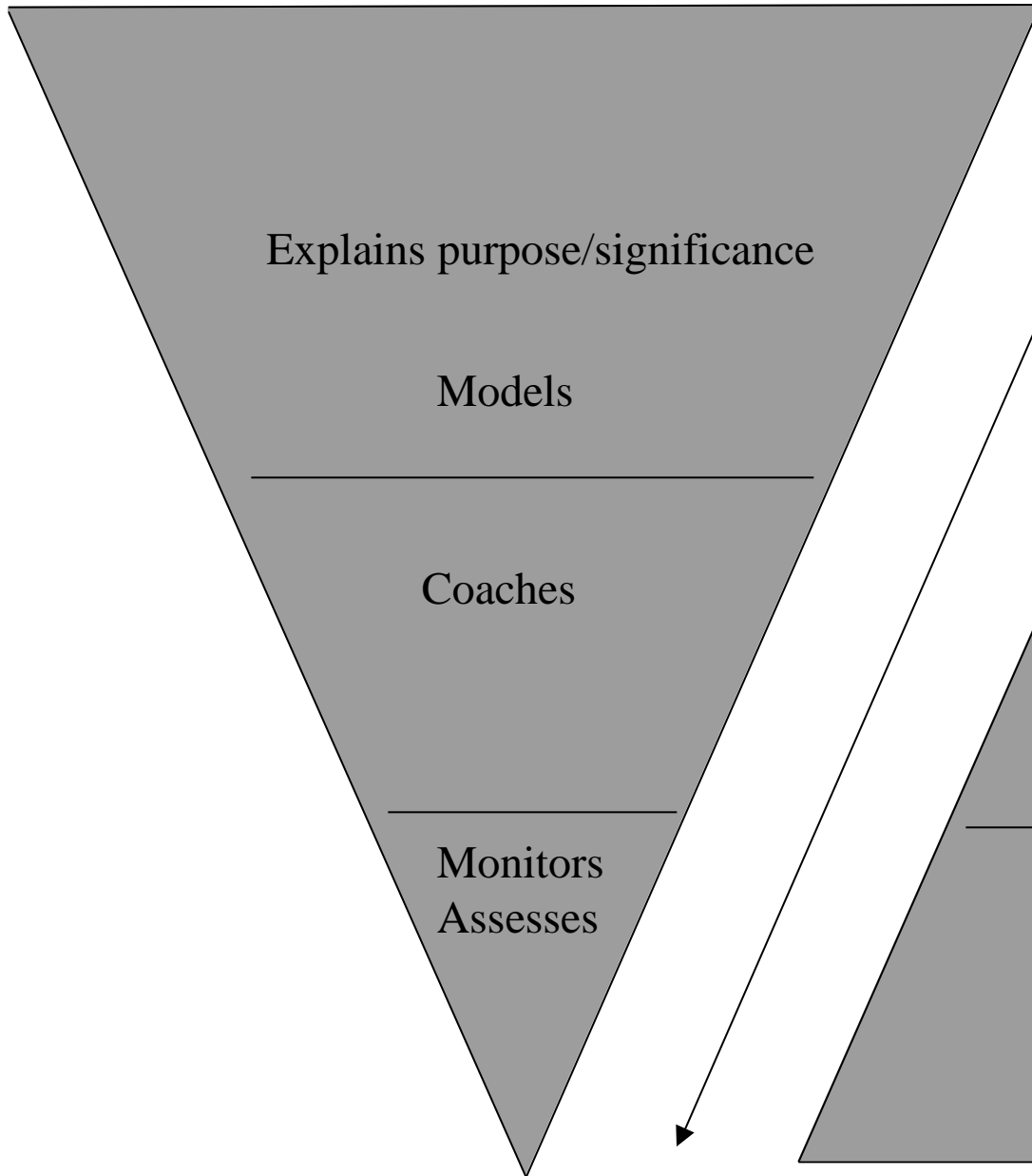
Flow of the “Book Club” Days

- Opening Community Share
- Reading
- Writing in Response Logs
- Student Book Clubs
- Closing Community Share

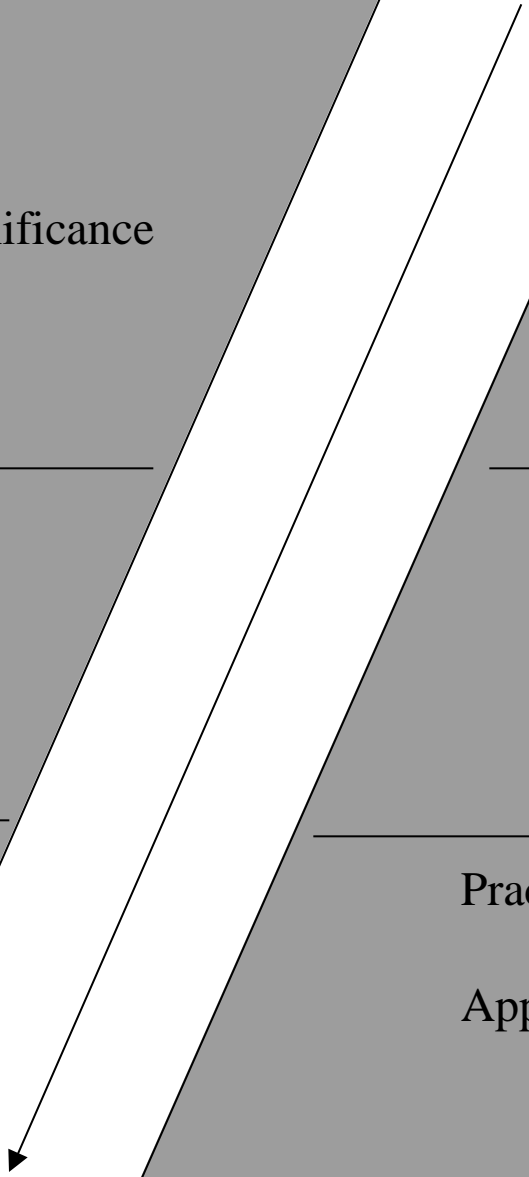
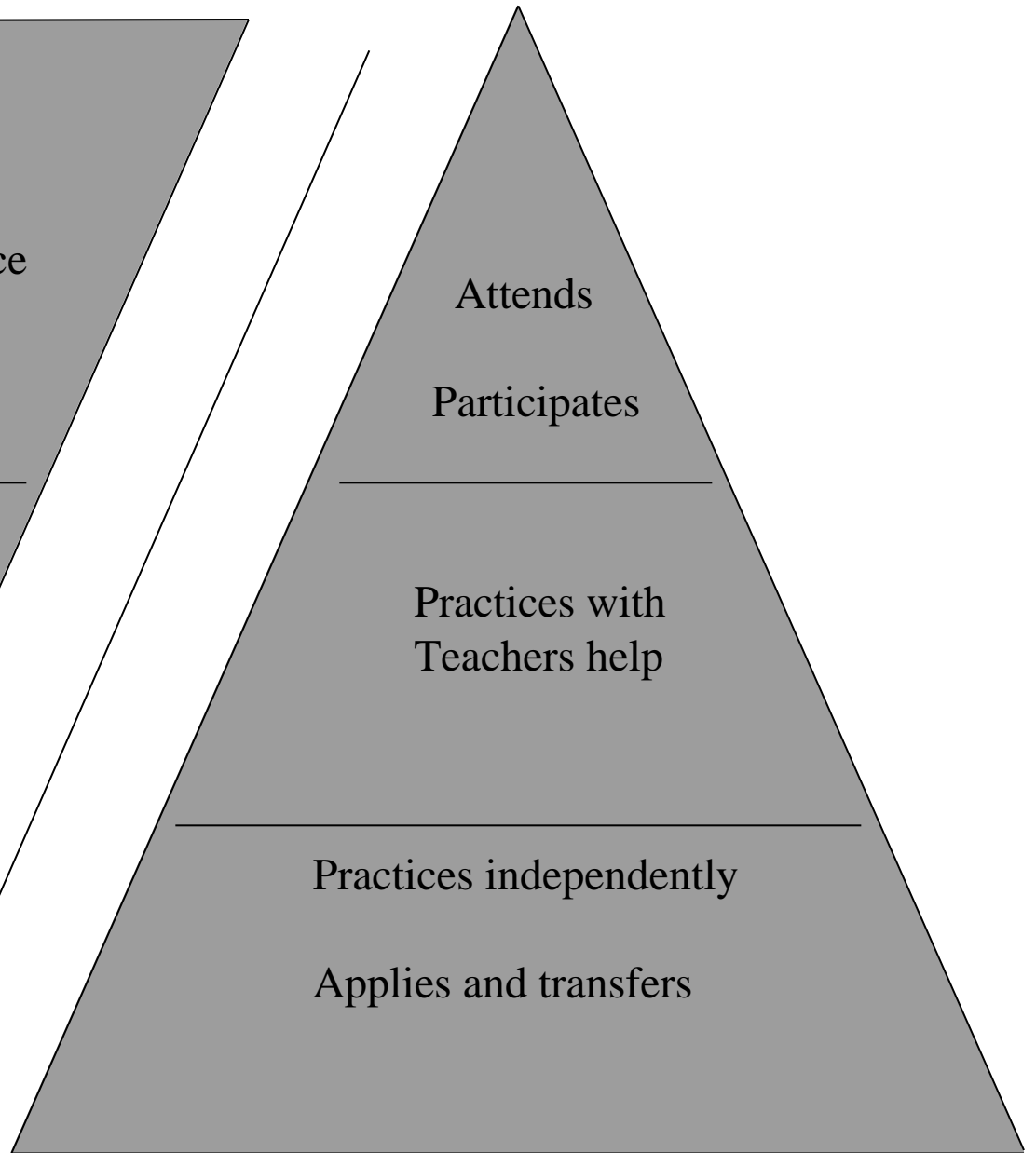
Flow of Literacy Block

- Planning for the day: for the class and as individuals [5 minutes]
- Guided reading group 1 and independent work for others [20 minutes]
- “Status report” [2 minutes]
- Guided reading group 2 and independent work [20 minutes]
- “Status report” [2 minutes]
- Guided reading group 3 and independent work (if time permits) [20 minutes]

Teacher Responsibility



Student Responsibility



Principles of Effective Comprehension Instruction

- Requires purposeful and explicit teaching
- Requires classroom interactions that support the understanding of specific texts
- Starts before children read conventionally
- Teaches children the skills and strategies used by expert readers
- Requires careful analysis of text to determine its appropriateness for particular students and strategies

Principles of Effective Comprehension Instruction

- Builds on and results in knowledge, vocabulary, and advanced language development
- Pervades all genres and school subjects
- Actively engages children in text and motivates them to use strategies and skills
- Requires assessments that inform instruction and monitor student progress
- Requires continuous teacher learning