

Building on Strengths: Empowering Struggling High School Readers Using Key Strategies

Jennifer Druggan
Otterbein University

Abstract

The curriculum presented is for struggling high school readers so that they can have mini-mastery experiences with two high yield reading strategies –self-questioning and summarizing – to improve their reading comprehension, which will build self-efficacy and help them to develop a growth mindset . The question that drove this research is what is the best way to meet the academic needs of a diverse student population in a high school, remedial reading class in a way that helps them to build their literacy toolbox and develop a respect for and maybe even a love of lifelong learning?

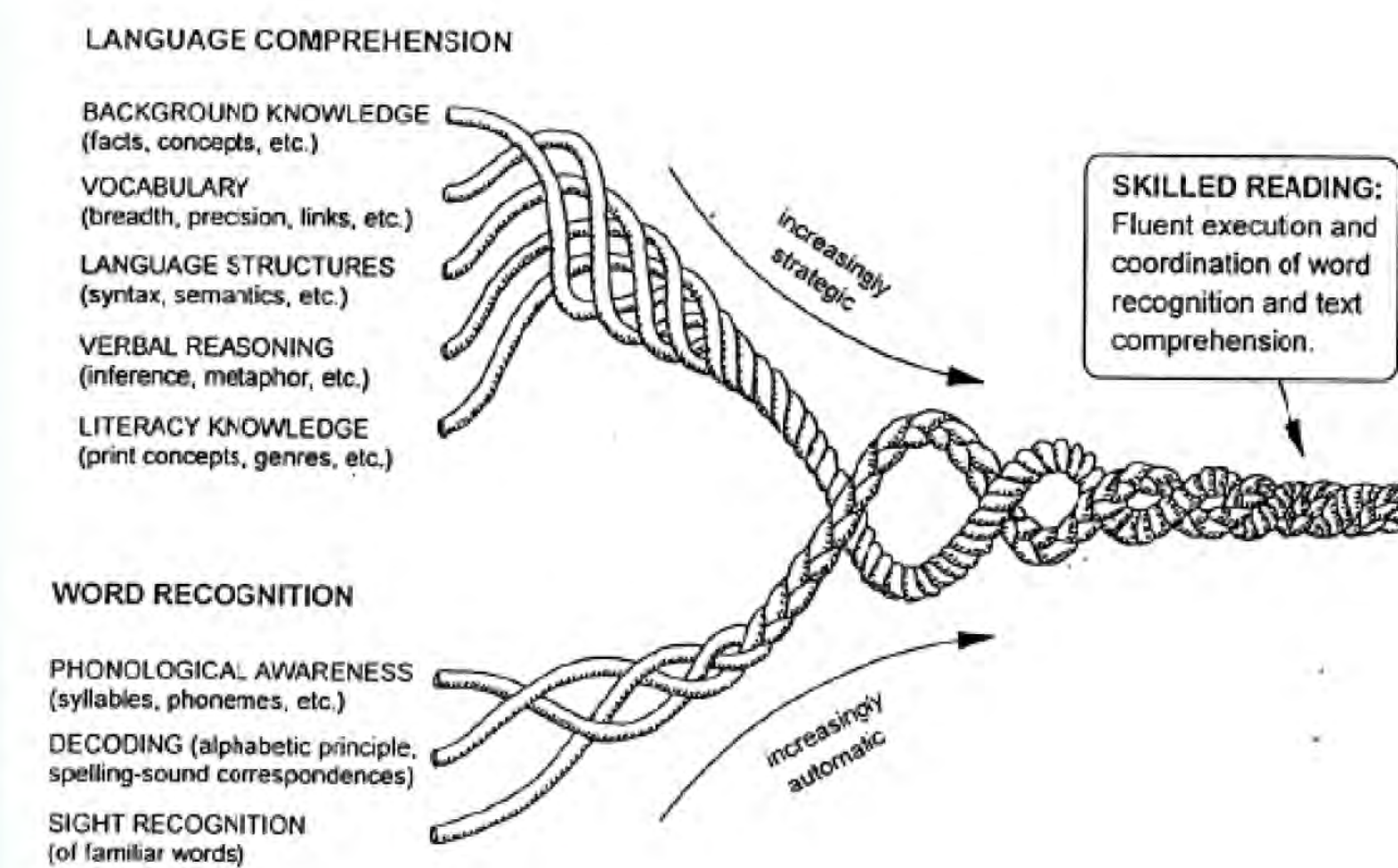
The curriculum is built upon current research from the Active View of Reading Model in conjunction with best practices in reading comprehension strategies and tools to build self-efficacy and a growth mindset . The unit plan outlines how to utilize self-questioning and summarizing to increase students' comprehension by using a variety of graphic organizers to help them organize and comprehend short stories, videos, novels, textbooks, and informational resources that can be found in an Environmental Science classroom . It also incorporates Fisher and Frey's Gradual Release Model and collaborative conversations to help students increase self-efficacy. While it is presented as a whole unit, it is designed to provide teachers with ideas and stimulate conversations among colleagues as these struggling readers are young adults who will soon graduate, and they deserve to have the confidence that comes with being a proficient reader.

Introduction: Chapter 1

- Research shows that a significant number of **students lack readiness for success** in the workforce.
- The solution for many school districts is to place struggling students in **remedial reading classes** to help them develop the necessary skills.
- Unfortunately, students lack the ability to **transfer the knowledge** that they learn in the remedial reading class into other learning and real-world situations.
- Therefore, they find themselves in the remedial reading class year after year, which further **confirms their belief** that they cannot read.
- However, research shows that helping students **build self-efficacy** can increase the likelihood that they will build the necessary skills in the remedial reading class and use that knowledge outside of the classroom.
- Current research also explains that remedial reading teachers need to help students **build their literacy toolbox** and help them to develop the confidence that the skills they learn will help them access even the most challenging texts.
- Mini-mastery experiences** utilizing two high impact reading strategies – **self-questioning and summarizing** – will help students increase their reading comprehension which will likely build self-efficacy and help them develop a growth mindset .

Literature Review: Chapter 2

- The **Simple View of Reading Model** : Reading = decoding x comprehension and Scarborough's research findings as depicted in the graphic below has provided the foundation for the remedial reading curriculum since it's publication in 2001.



- In 2021, Duke & Cartwright built on work of Gough & Tunmer as well as Scarborough to create the **Active View of Reading Model** depicted in the graphic below.



- Duke & Cartwright's model provides a more comprehensive perspective on all of the components that influence reading comprehension, specifically they include **active self-regulation** as well as bridging processes and language comprehension. They found the most significant gap for struggling readers rested in their limited self-regulatory process skills also known as reading comprehension strategies.
- According to a meta-analyses by John Hattie and findings of other researchers, **two high yield reading comprehension strategies** are self-questioning and summarizing.
- Additional support for students can be found in Bandura's seminal work, which explains how educators and researchers have found **self-efficacy** to be an essential quality of successful learners.
- This can be acquired by students when teacher provide them with experiences through **four sources** : performance mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and emotional arousal.
- Carol Dweck's research shows that as students have mini-mastery experiences through the four sources of information, they begin to see and believe that they can grow and become efficient readers which propels their growth and academic risk-taking. They develop a **growth mindset** .

Theoretical Framework: Chapter 3

- By the time that struggling reader reach high school, years of failure make closing the achievement gap much more challenging.
- Additionally, high school curriculum often includes students needing to access content by reading high level informational texts. However, helping these students is possible with the right approach.
- Self-Efficacy Theory** : Bandura provides specific paths for helping struggling, high school readers to find success and growth even when they expect failure to be the result of trying to learn.
- A **productive learning environment** allow students to:
 - See their peers struggling with challenging tasks and finding success.
 - Experience trying and succeeding at challenging tasks.
 - Receive feedback and encouragement for attempting to try challenging tasks regardless of whether or not they succeed.
 - Take risks in a supportive environment in which it is safe to make mistakes and even fail sometimes.
- Growth Mindset Theory** : Dweck outline methods for helping students internalize self-efficacy theory and use it so that they can direct their own growth and learning.
- Active View of Reading Model** : the curriculum is based on this model which adds self-regulatory processing skills to the existing curriculum which is based upon Scarborough's Simple View of Reading.
- Self-Regulatory Processing Skills** : those which have been deemed most efficacious by educators and researchers are self-questioning and summarizing.

Curriculum: Chapter 4

The unit was designed to provided students opportunities to practice and learn how to use self-questioning and summarizing to comprehend texts real-world texts and resources. The hope is that they will develop skills that they can transfer to other classes as well as to real-world reading experiences. Therefore, it is important that students practice with texts and resources that are relevant to their learning and life.

The resources chosen can be found in an Environmental Science classroom. Each activity is paired with a relevant resource to help students extract information that helps them better understand the answer to the essential question: What impact do humans have on the environment?

Throughout the lesson, students will work both collaboratively and individually to increase mini-mastery experiences as well as self-efficacy. A particular emphasis is also placed on utilizing feedback that helps promote a growth mindset in students.

The resources include:

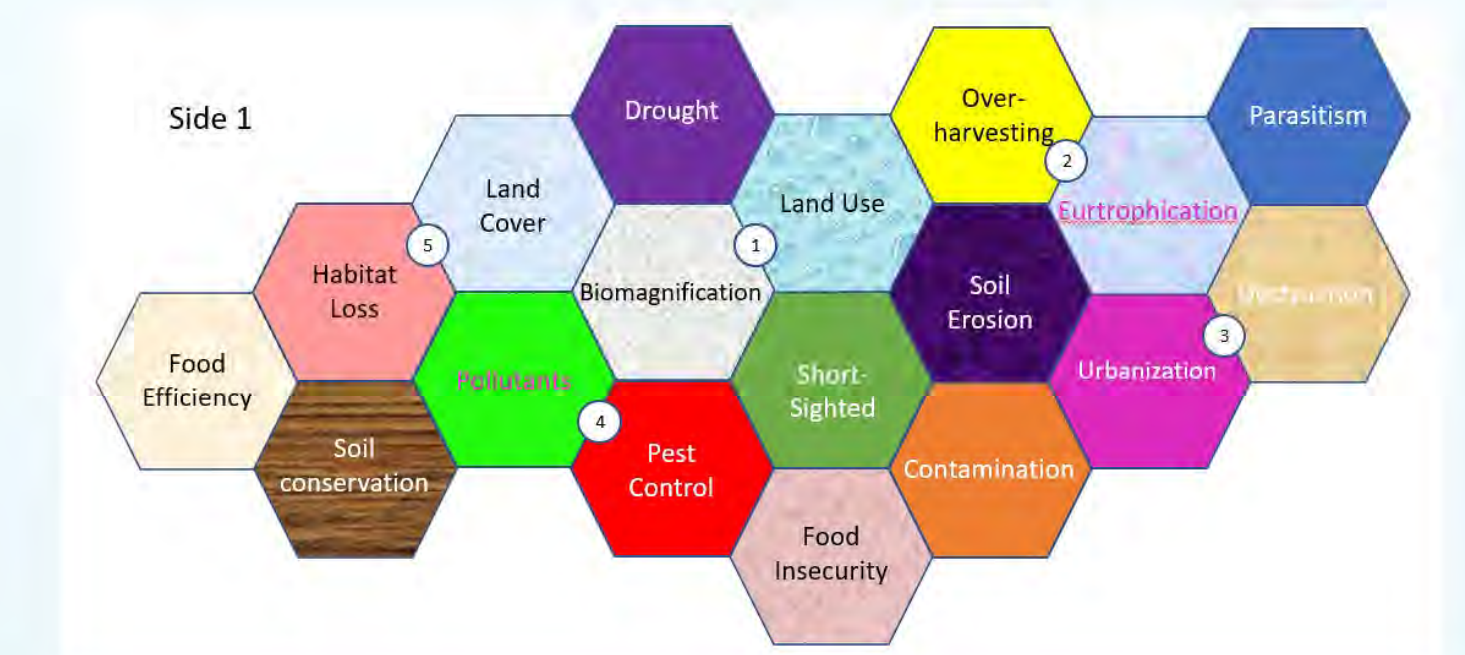
- A video
- Two children's books
- Two chapters out of a textbook
- A chapter from a novel
- Five informational texts

Curriculum: Chapter 4 con't.

The teaching tools that are utilized include:

- Discussion and collaboration stems
- Practice creating and answering various types of questions
- Hexagonal thinking activities
- Graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, word sorts, Cornell Notes, mind maps, and a jigsaw graphic organizer.

The unit culminates in an opportunity for students to showcase their skills and new content knowledge with a hexagonal thinking graphic. This activity shows their comprehension of a variety of resources along with their ability to synthesize the information and make connections between the various topics.



Conclusion: Chapter 5

Teachers need a solid curriculum based on proven research and a large toolbox of strategies if they want to help struggling high school readers. It can be accomplished when teachers use resources that are connected to students' lives and learning. With repeated practice with high yield reading comprehension strategies, specifically self-questioning and summarizing, students can use mini-mastery experiences to build their skill set and self-efficacy. This process can help foster a growth mindset that students can take with them into the world after graduation.

The next steps to further this research are to determine which content area texts are most impactful to students. Resources need to be scaffolded by reading level initially, so that students are able to build those mini-mastery experiences. Finally, the curriculum needs to be tested to determine if focusing on instruction and intentional practice on self-questioning and summarizing will create mini-mastery experiences that increase comprehension and self-efficacy which will boost a growth mindset.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review* 84(2), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295x.84.2.191>
- Duke, N. K., & Cartwright, K. B. (2021). The Science of Reading Progresses: Communicating Advances Beyond the Simple View of Reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56(1), S25–S44. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rq.411>
- Dweck, C. S. (2016). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* Ballantine Books.
- Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Hattie, J. (2016). *Visible learning for literacy, grades K-12: Implementing the practices that work best to accelerate student learning*. Corwin/A SAGE Company.
- McVee, M., Orlieb, E., Reichenberg, J., & Pearson, P.D. (2019). *The Gradual Release of Responsibility in Literacy Research and Practice* Emerald Publishing Limited. States. *Change* 51(2), 14–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2019.1569968>