



**Comprehension instruction after 4th grade:**  
*What does RtI look like in a middle school?*

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**Strategic Teaching of At-Risk Students:**  
 Improving Reading Comprehension Through Story  
 Structure Pedagogy  
 (2007-2008)

**CBER Goals**

**Research:**

Conduct school-based research on developing and evaluating evidence based practices in literacy, behavior supports, and assessment

**Translating Research to Practice:**

Support schools, districts, and states in adopting, implementing, and sustaining evidence based practices



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**CT Reading Summit**

**The Grade 4 Reading Achievement Gap**  
*(all students)*

Subgroup	Size of gap in scale score points*	States with smaller gap	States with the same gap	States with larger gap	States that cannot be compared
Lunch Status	37.9	48	1	0	0
White/Black	34.1	31	10	0	8
White/Hispanic	28.7	24	20	0	5



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**CT Reading Summit**

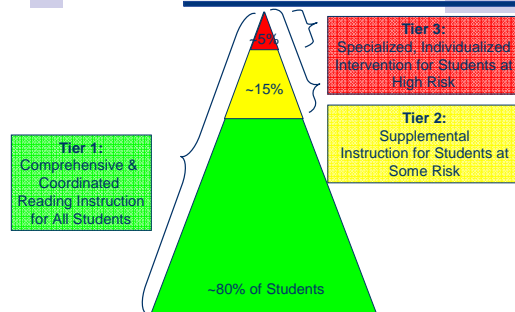
**The Grade 8 Reading Achievement Gap**  
*(all students)*

Subgroup	Size of gap in scale score points*	States with smaller gap	States with the same gap	States with larger gap	States that cannot be compared
Lunch Status	32.0	19	30	0	0
White/Black	30.0	2	38	0	9
White/Hispanic	33.3	26	14	0	9



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**CBER Literacy**



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## RC & Adol. Key Findings

### Content: *What can be taught?*

1. Targeted instruction of *what good readers* do improves RC for academically diverse learners
2. Focus on teaching students with LD and students at-risk *cognitive strategies*
3. Self-monitoring, summarizing, and story grammar self-questioning are *retained*
4. Reading comprehension improvement for students was demonstrated for both *elementary and secondary* learners.

### Pedagogy: *How can it be taught?*

1. Explicit instruction improved the reading comprehension of students with LD, students at-risk for failure, as well as for typically achieving peers.
2. Strategy instruction that is overt and explicit provides the most accurate prediction of magnitude of treatment outcomes.

(See Faggella-Luby & Deshler, 2008 for more)



## Study Design

- ◆ Pretest-posttest Control-group Design
- ◆ Placement w/ 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade DRP scores
- ◆ 75 MS 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders
- ◆ 6 (2x4) Tier-Two Literacy Classes per grade-level
- ◆ Intensity of Tier 2
  - 30 min. of instruction
  - 2-3 days per week
  - Instructional Groups of 6-8
  - 18 weeks



## Materials

- ◆ Progressive Passages
  - Aesop's Fables
  - Folktales
  - High-Low texts
- ◆ Classroom Libraries



## Demographics

- ◆ Setting: Urban
- ◆ Ethnicity:

	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade		6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	
	Experimental (n=12)	Comparison (n=25)	Experimental (n=14)	Comparison (n=24)
Caucasian	16%	28%	21%	20%
African American	0%	4%	14%	4%
Hispanic	75%	64%	64%	75%
Other (Ukrainian, Asian)	8%	4%	0%	0%



## Demographics

	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade		6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	
	Experimental (n=12)	Comparison (n=25)	Experimental (n=14)	Comparison (n=24)
Mean Age Months	131	132	142	141
Gender (M/F)	7/5	12/13	4/10	11/13
Disability Status	0%	*8%	0%	0%
ELL Status	16%	28%	35%	37%
Free/Red Lunch	76%	80%	93%	83%

\* 2 Students: ADHD, LD



## Procedures: Experimental

- ◆ 2 5<sup>th</sup>-year UCONN student interns
- ◆ 2 Classes each of Modified Embedded Story Structure
- ◆ Teacher-mediated to Student-mediated Instruction\*  
Strategies
  1. Self-Questioning
  2. 6 Elements of Structure in Narrative
    - Structure Organizer & Plot Diagram
  3. Summary/Retelling Formula



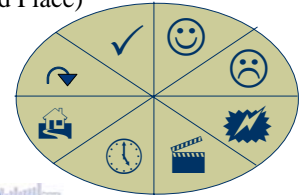
## Self-Questioning

- ♦ **Who** is the main character?
- ♦ **What** is the central conflict and how does it begin?
- ♦ **When** does the story take place?
- ♦ **Where** does the story take place?
- ♦ **Which** decision or event is the turning point?
- ♦ **How** does the central conflict end/resolve?
- ♦ **Why** did the author tell us the story in this way?



## 6 Elements of Structure

1. Character (Protagonist/Antagonist)
2. Central Conflict/ Initiating Event
3. Setting (Time and Place)
4. Climax
5. Resolution
6. Theme



## Summary/Retelling Formula

1. This story is about how (**main character**) struggles with (**central conflict**).
2. It also involves (**antagonist, with supporting detail**).
3. The struggle begins when (**initiating event**) and takes place (**time & place**).
4. The story climaxes when (**climax**) and the conflict is resolved by/when (**resolution**).
5. I think the author is trying to tell us that (**theme**).



## The ESS Organizer



## Procedures: Comparison

- ♦ 4 Reading Teachers
- ♦ 2 Classes each
- ♦ Varied Instruction

### Instruction

1. Mini-lessons (Active Reading: preview, prediction, characters, questions)
2. Independent & Guided Reading
3. Journal Writing



## Measures: Formative

- ♦ **MAZE (Pre/Progress/Post)**
  - Cloze procedure removing words/providing three choices
  - 5th grade passages from Aimsweb
  - Sentence level comprehension
  - Normed



## Measures: Summative

- ♦ **Strategy Use Test (Pre/Post):**
  - Student actual use of strategic approaches to reading
  - Given several 375-word passages to read from Aimsweb:
    - Self-questions
    - Label components of Story Structure Diagram
    - Writing a Summary
- ♦ **Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Subtest (Pre/Post):**
  - 35-minute multiple choice reading comprehension measure
  - Norm referenced for 5th and 6th grade level



## Measures

- ♦ **Fidelity Check:**
  - Checklist of teaching practices in experimental classrooms
  - Running record of teaching practices in comparison classrooms
  - Data gathered by trained research team members
  - 6-7 visits for experimental; 5 visits for comparison (3/4)
  - Interscorer reliability calculated for 20% of the lessons ranged 88%-100%



## Conclusions I

- ♦ Intervention subjects demonstrated consistent progress on Cloze tests
  - Trend is consistent with research on strategy acquisition
- ♦ 5<sup>th</sup> grade at-risk students can learn to use intervention
- ♦ 6<sup>th</sup> grade at-risk students may receive similar instruction in content area classes!



## Conclusions II

- ♦ Gates post test scores indicate significant differences only between grade levels
  - No significant differences between classes of first year interns and veteran teachers
- ♦ Fidelity rates indicate intervention was challenging to implement when student behavior off-task



## Limitations

- ♦ Pretesting was not administered in a standard fashion
- ♦ No significant differences between groups on post test measures
- ♦ Linear Cloze trend may indicate change over time
- ♦ Interns shared intervention instruction with RTs
- ♦ Social validity proved challenging given urban context, philosophical differences, and acts of...



## Challenges to Consider

- ♦ Principal had a stroke first week of school; Buses vandalized, Power goes out, Arrests, Snow days, Fire drills
- ♦ 30 minutes isn't really 30 minutes
- ♦ Time: In first 18 weeks, only 2 back-to-back complete weeks!
- ♦ Access to scaffolded materials proved challenging
- ♦ Lack of correlation between RC measures (2/21)





Thank You!

For more information and additional  
handouts please go to:

[www.cber.org](http://www.cber.org)