

Research Brief

The Challenge and a Bold Response

Calls for higher standards echo across the country and challenge the educational community to prepare students to be deep, thoughtful readers of high-quality literary and informational text. As we usher in this new era of increased literacy standards—one in which the reader’s role will extend to encompass both basic understandings of texts as well as sophisticated responses to them (Newkirk, 2012)—educators are actively searching for robust ways to balance the demands associated with close and careful reading against the current reality. Fortunately, Fisher and Frey offer a bold response in their sound, research-based pedagogy designed to support educators in achieving the goal of college and career readiness for all students (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Fisher and Frey, in partnership with Corwin Literacy, offer both a pedagogical framework and the professional development resources to support educators’ day-to-day implementation of more rigorous instruction for all students. In these resources, the word “access” is key. This access opens new pathways for both educators and their students.

An Instructional Approach to Implement Close and Careful Reading

Coaches and teachers will find valuable resources featuring research-based teaching practices for close and careful reading that incorporate years of research by renowned literacy experts (Adler & Van Doren, 1972). Fisher and Frey (2013) offer an instructional bridge connecting readers to text through a model that provides a clear and an explicit road map for teachers. This approach, organized around five Access Points, supports teachers in planning to:

1. Set a Purpose for Reading and How to Model Skilled Reading (Wilhelm, 2001)
2. Provide Scaffolded and Close Reading Instruction to Guide Students Through Complex Texts (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Ruddell & Unrau, 2013)
3. Create Opportunities for Collaborative Conversations to Refine Understanding (Johnston, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978)
4. Guide Students Through an Increasingly Complex Independent Reading Staircase (Yeager & Dweck, 2012)
5. Use Formative Assessment to Determine What Students Know and Plan Instruction (Frey & Fisher, 2011)

Creating Text-Dependent Questions to Support Close Reading

Close reading of text involves an investigation of a short piece of text in which readers are guided to deeply analyze and appreciate the text through text-based questions and rich discussion. Fisher and Frey (2015a, 2015b) demonstrate how to design questions that lead students through increasingly more complex thinking about text. Grounded in Webb's (2002) Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework, the four phases draw on the work of respected reading researchers (Pearson & Fielding, 1991) and move students from gaining a literal understanding of text to understanding its deeper meaning. These phases support students as they navigate through four key questions:

1. What does the text say?
2. How does the text work?
3. What does the text mean?
4. What does *the text inspire you to do*?

Professional Development and Coaching

While many professional development programs may introduce teachers to new ideas about content and pedagogy, “what really counts is what happens *in between workshops*” (Fullan, 2010, p. 53). Research tells us “the kind of high-intensity, job-embedded collaborative learning that is most effective is not a common feature of professional development across most states, districts, and schools in the United States” (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009, p. 4). Researchers’ findings that teachers need at least 14 hours of intensive, focused professional development to implement new practices is noteworthy.

Further, studies show that the combination of professional development, practice, and coaching combine to ensure new strategies are “mastered and implemented in class” (Gulamhussein, 2013). The PD Resource Center gives schools and districts the luxury to provide *a minimum* of 14 hours of yearlong flexible, ongoing, embedded professional development such that teachers are learning *as they continue their day-to-day practice* and not in an isolated, one-off workshop setting.

Many professional development programs introduce teachers to new ideas. However, what really matters are the day-to-day embedded opportunities that support teachers in implementing new ideas and practices (Fullan, 2010). Grounded in the most current research on professional development and coaching (Knight, 2011), this powerful collection of resources is designed to equip coaches and facilitators with the tools they need to guide teachers through a straightforward, step-by-step learning process—one that will ultimately provide them and their students with the expertise they need be successful with complex texts.

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