BY IRENE C. FOUNTAS AND GAY SU PINNELL

EVERY CHILD, EVERY CLASSROOM, EVERY DAY:
From Vision to Action in Literacy Learning

When schools establish a coherent vision for literacy learning, educators can act in unison to ensure high literacy outcomes for every child.

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE was published in *The Reading Teacher* Volume 72, Number 1, July/August 2018. In this article, Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell examine every child's right, in every classroom, every day to live a literate life. Students deserve schools that are committed to a hopeful vision for their lives, both inside the classroom walls and beyond them. Improving literacy outcomes for every child is a goal worthy of educators' best efforts. This high goal is made more challenging due to shifting mandates in education that can leave literacy professionals and school leaders disoriented, seeking a guaranteed "fix." The authors propose a more coherent, effective way to attain this goal: thinking of the school as a system. Fountas and Pinnell discuss four essential elements to designing a schoolwide system for literacy learning: a shared vision and set of core values; common goals, common language, and collective responsibility; a high level of teacher expertise; and a culture of continuous professional learning.

A Systems Approach to High Literacy Outcomes for All Children

Improving student outcomes in literacy is not a simple, one-solution matter. Some single solutions may include coaching to help individuals get better at teaching, providing good professional development to groups, or implementing a set of new instructional practices. Yet, no one effort is sufficient. Reaching our high goals will require thinking about how the school functions as an interdependent system of initiatives that operates within a culture that supports continuous study and improvement (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015; Fountas & Pinnell, in press). Many good ideas flounder and fail because of haphazard implementation, conflicts, unintended consequences, an inability to sustain effort, and a simple lack of communication. It can be easy to get discouraged. We must keep our sights set not on the practices or the programs but on giving students the gift of a literate life in school. We know that this is possible if we see the school as a culture within which every student has equal access to literacy learning no matter the teacher, the classroom, or the grade level. Systems thinking requires a comprehensive and thoughtful plan, and it will take time. In this article, we address four essential and interrelated elements of a design for a schoolwide system of literacy learning.

Element 1: A Shared Vision and Set of Core Values

Most of us have taught in times of shifting literacy mandates and polarizing views that can leave us feeling frustrated, overwhelmed, confused, and even cynical. We can surely expect more mandates and

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sweeping waves of change, one after the other, in the near and distant future. We can maintain our equilibrium in the face of these challenges when we are rooted in a set of worthy values, a solid foundation of research and data, evidence from observable reading and writing behaviors of our students over time, and good common sense. Then, we will be able to maintain and build upon a continuous course of improvement year after year and navigate the next wave without compromising our values and losing sight of the needs of our students.

Our Vision and Values

In our practice, we have found it valuable to articulate a vision of what comprehensive, coherent, high-quality classroom literacy teaching and learning looks like and to enumerate the values that we hold for students and literacy educators. The following values and beliefs guide our work because we believe they are worthy of the students

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we teach and the colleagues with whom we collaborate.

The schools we envision are a community of readers and writers. They recognize every child's right to grow up literate as a member of a dynamic learning community that values the richness of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Members of the school community are treated and treat others with empathy, kindness, and respect.

Literacy educators in the school work as a team. They take collective responsibility for the high achievement of each student. They make instructional decisions based on evidence gained from systematic observation and ongoing assessment data and then teach using a coherent set of evidence-based instructional practices in whole-class, small-group, and individual contexts.

The students engage in authentic inquiry about topics that are relevant to them. They are motivated to investigate new ideas that fuel intellectual curiosity. Because they believe in their ability to acquire and use language and literacy for meaningful purposes, the students act as powerful agents in their own learning.

Students spend time in school doing what readers and writers do. They think, talk, read, and write about their world. Each school year, they engage with a huge volume of texts that provide rich, diverse examples of genre, theme, topic, setting, and other literary qualities. Their school experience is coherent; students read and write constantly. By middle school, each student has read and processed deeply more than 2,000 texts. This repertoire of experiences and ideas acquired through texts enables students to understand their physical, social, and emotional world and their roles as informed global citizens.

Developing Your Vision and Values

As you reflect on your vision for your school and your values for students and educators, consider the following questions:

- Ideally, what would you see and hear in a high-quality literacy classroom during a morning of literacy learning?
- What would the students be doing?
- What would the teacher be doing?
- How does this vision reveal what matters most to you as a school community?

When educators begin by articulating their core values and beliefs about literacy learning, the resulting principles guide every decision the school makes, allowing the team to stay focused on what really matters for students. Of course, the articulation of values and beliefs is a process of developing consensus and, ultimately, requires a strong commitment from everyone on the team. That consensus is essential. Even if there are a few shades of disagreement, with consensus the educators commit to the agreed-upon values and beliefs and to one another in upholding them in the daily work of the school. Educators need to grapple with beliefs, values, and a forward-thinking vision until they fully understand and believe in them and agree that they can commit to act in unison when they walk out of the meeting room and into their classrooms.

We recommend expressing your core values and corresponding vision in a dynamic document that can be revisited and reflected on regularly by both experienced and new teachers and by administrators. With such a document in hand, your team begins by recognizing and valuing each individual's voice and expertise, ensuring that all of the educators at the school are on the same page, and moving beyond an approach where each teacher applies his or her own methods or philosophy, to create a shared inspirational vision of what is possible for every student. With this vision established, you can focus on how you will work together to realize high literacy outcomes in your school for the long term. The critical value of an articulated vision for literacy is that students are guaranteed access to a coherent educational experience regardless of the teacher, the grade level, or the latest educational mandate.

Once a set of core values and a shared vision are established, the team will gain clarity as to the materials and resources that teachers and students need, the areas of teacher expertise that will be required over time, and what will be needed in terms of educators' commitment to its implementation over the long term.

The goal is not cookie-cutter teachers and classrooms but a set of underlying

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principles that will characterize a high level of teaching and learning opportunities for every student, in every classroom, every day. When you, your principal, and your colleagues engage in the process of identifying your values and beliefs and creating a common vision, you set the tone for the future. Instead of clinging to individual preferences and the status quo, you are

now thinking systemically. The result will be an improved system for assuring that every student has access and equity in achieving high literacy competencies.

Element 2: Common Goals, Common Language, and Collective Responsibility

With an inspirational vision developed by the team, you have a solid foundation of values and beliefs to establish common literacy goals. When educators work and learn together in pursuit of these goals, they develop a common language that they can use to collaborate, communicate, and establish clarity and coherence in the expectations for the teaching and learning that the school provides to every student. The language naturally shifts from *my* students and *my* classroom to *our* students, *our* classrooms, *our* curriculum, *our* school, *our* data, *our* goals, *our* professional learning opportunities, and *our* expectations for students and one another.

With common language and common goals, your school is now a community within which all members act as a team and focus attention on achieving a shared vision, rather than operating as a building of solitary professionals operating in fragmented directions. The culture of the school becomes one of support, expanded resources, collective expertise, mutual accountability and responsibility, and interdependence instead of a culture of isolated professionalism. We have observed that when there is evidence of a strong professional community among teachers, the classrooms often reflect the same tone, making school coherent for children.

With common language and common goals, school also becomes coherent, and your students flourish because school now makes sense to them. Students learn across a highly diverse body of content.

They learn social skills and responsibility, explore avenues of interest through inquiry, and develop their sense of agency, that is, their level of ownership over what and how they learn. They find pleasure in immersing themselves in a diversity of texts and make most of their own choices about what to read. However, they get the same messages about the role of literacy in their lives year after year from all members of the school community. The messages validate each student's identity as an empowered learner whose potential to lead a literate life is emerging. Students believe they can learn, grow, and make their lives better [Dweck, 2006]. The consistency and coherence of the messages help students internalize a powerful understanding: Their school community believes in their ability and is invested in the process of their

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growth as readers, writers, and language users.

A culture of collective responsibility means that all the educators in your school take responsibility for the success of all the students every year through their caring, leadership, and collective expertise. The adults are invested in the learning

enterprise, believing their collective efficacy will improve literacy outcomes for all students. Developing a culture of collective responsibility requires focusing attention on each student as a learner, regardless of social circumstances beyond the school. Your beliefs about all students influence your actions and your language, which in turn influence students' beliefs about their own abilities. In a culture of shared responsibility, it is easier for you to maximize the success of all students in spite of the real challenges they may face outside of school.

As we move through the 21st century, our classrooms are becoming increasingly, wonderfully diverse. Cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity is a richness for the entire school community. Our collective responsibility is to assure literacy success for every student by creating inclusive environments that honor and leverage the strengths of diversity.

In the equitable classroom, students need culturally proficient teachers [Saphier, 2017]. Cultural proficiency means showing behaviors that acknowledge and value the culture of those different from oneself. Culturally responsive teaching is about your stance as an educator and your ability to help culturally and linguistically diverse students use their cultural learning tools to accelerate their learning [Hammond, 2014].

Culturally proficient teaching may require some work and study, not just of research but also of the students you teach. However, it is worth the effort because you can acknowledge and value the cultures different from your own. We all share an obligation to learn about the different cultures of students to provide learning environments and schools that are inclusive.

Once you achieve a state of collective responsibility, the value to your own professional experience and learning will be obvious. The burden is lighter, the anxiety is lower, and your own ability to improve student outcomes is enhanced. When you

are working together to take responsibility for "our students" instead of "my students," the conversation changes. You have a shared pool of expertise and support upon which you can draw and to which you can contribute.

Element 3: A High Level of Teacher Expertise

Your growing literacy expertise will be essential in preparing a diverse population of students for the increasing demands of literacy in the coming decades. Competencies of the 21st century demand deeper and more complex thinking and learning. They include a sense of agency and direction, a global perspective, deep content knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and strong collaboration and communication skills.

In this section, we describe four areas of teacher expertise that we believe are essential in achieving coherence in your school's design for literacy learning (see Figure 1). This constellation of un-

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derstandings may seem daunting, but expertise is developed over time within the supportive learning community. The commitment to collective responsibility is that everyone helps everyone else get better all the time. You don't have to be a bad teacher to get better [McKay, 2012]. You can be highly competent and still learn more about your craft as you strive

to reach every student. You will also find that teaching is more joyful when you are learning something new every day, every week, every year, as you hone your expertise. We will explore each area of expertise briefly.

A Repertoire of Techniques for Observation and Assessment

The more you know about how students learn to read and write text (and about how they think and talk based on texts), the better you can act on those understandings. Your understanding of the reading and writing processes is built through observing students' reading, writing, and language behaviors and noticing how they develop over time. Reading, writing, and language behaviors are what you see or hear as each student engages in the processes. They are the behavioral evidence of what the student controls, partially controls, or does not yet control.

Observation of these behaviors increases your understanding of how each student is building a literacy processing system and contributes to expertise in the next two areas; more importantly, it allows you to teach more powerfully tomorrow. Data-informed teaching requires your skill in the observation and analysis of reading and writing behaviors. We cannot imagine

teaching a student to read or write without access to detailed information on *how* they read or write. The most effective teaching is scientific: You analyze and respond minute by minute to the precise reading or writing

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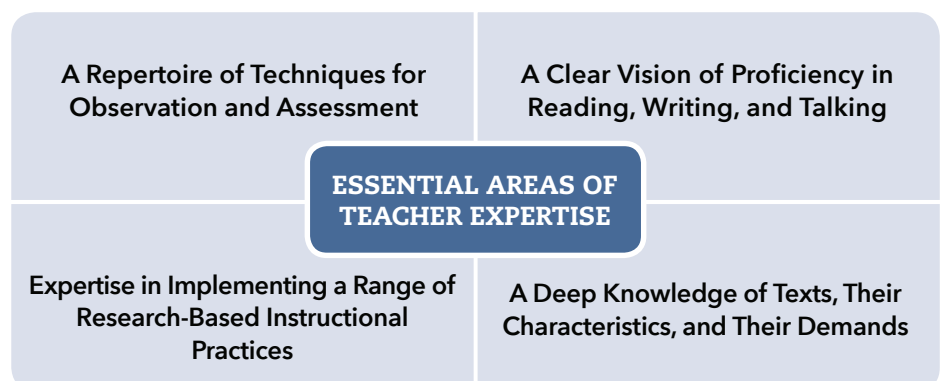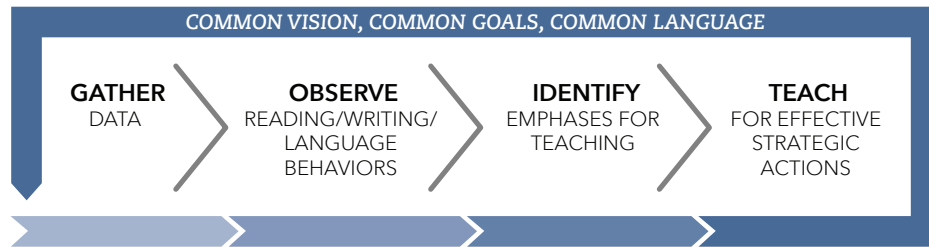
behaviors you observe. You make decisions in the moment based on the evidence.

The classroom is filled with students of varying strengths and needs in language and literacy competencies. Giving the same exact program to all students at the same time and pace and in the same way is not equitable. Although students increase their array of competencies over time, they take

Essential Areas of Teacher Expertise

A Repertoire of Techniques for Observation and Assessment	A Clear Vision of Proficiency in Reading, Writing, and Talking
ESSENTIAL AREAS OF TEACHER EXPERTISE	
Expertise in Implementing a Range of Research-Based Instructional Practices	A Deep Knowledge of Texts, Their Characteristics, and Their Demands

From *The School Leader's Literacy Handbook: Turning Vision Into Action*, copyright by I.C. Fountas and G.S. Pinnell, in press, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Figure 1

The Responsive Teaching Cycle

COMMON VISION, COMMON GOALS, COMMON LANGUAGE

GATHER	OBSERVE	IDENTIFY	TEACH
DATA	READING/WRITING/ LANGUAGE BEHAVIORS	EMPHASES FOR TEACHING	FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC ACTIONS

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Figure 2

"different paths to common outcomes" (Clay, 2001, p. 6). If the challenge in teaching is to meet the diverse needs of your students to ensure literacy success for all of them, then the assessment tools that you use must capture differences in strengths and needs, they must record how competencies have changed at different points in time, and most importantly, they must yield information to guide teaching decisions. No amount of time spent on assessment is worth much if it does not result in improved teaching.

Assessment that is systematically applied in a standard way provides the information that enables you to plan for instruction for whole-group, small-group, and individual teaching that connects with what the students need to learn. An example is the running record, developed by Clay (2017); we have used this standardized assessment procedure intensively because of the valuable information that it captures over time (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a). The running record provides for close observation, coding, and analysis of oral reading behaviors, and we have added rubrics for assessing dimensions of fluency and comprehension to provide a full picture. Taken over time, running records provide an extensive, detailed picture of the student's progress. Likewise, many teachers have made extensive use of writing rubrics to capture progress over time.

These measures, along with observational notes, provide the data that lead to

responsive teaching: a view of teaching as a process of gathering data, observing reading or writing behaviors, identifying priorities for teaching, and using facilitative language to build on a student's strengths and expand the student's existing reading and writing competencies (Clay, 2001; see Figure 2). Responsive teaching is different

from literacy schemes in which teaching is a prescribed sequence of lessons that you deliver to all students.

Learning to read is complex, and the journey for each student is unique. Yet, in time, we want to bring all students to the same homogenous outcomes: a fully developed and proficient processing system for reading and writing and an elaborate language system that will allow them to articulate their understandings. In contrast, placing all students rigidly into the same program leads to serious differences in outcomes in that all (or almost all) may make progress, but not all will have the opportunity to fully develop as readers and writers because the teaching does not come to meet them. There is no point of contact between the teaching
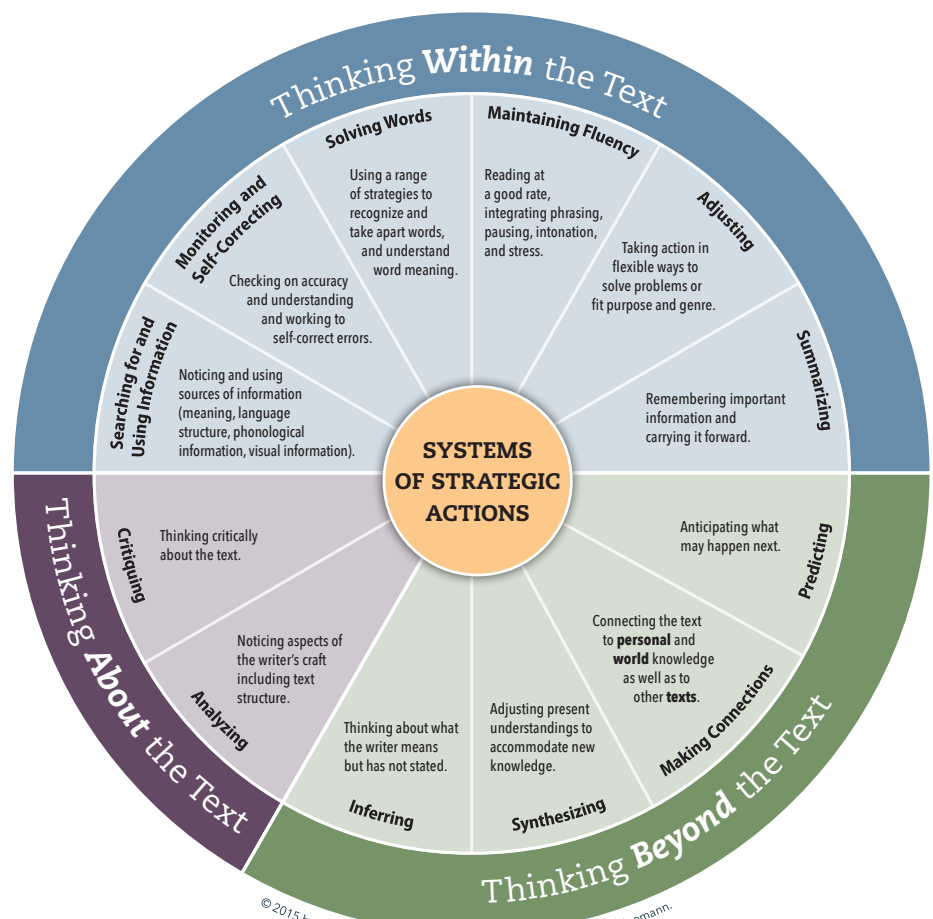
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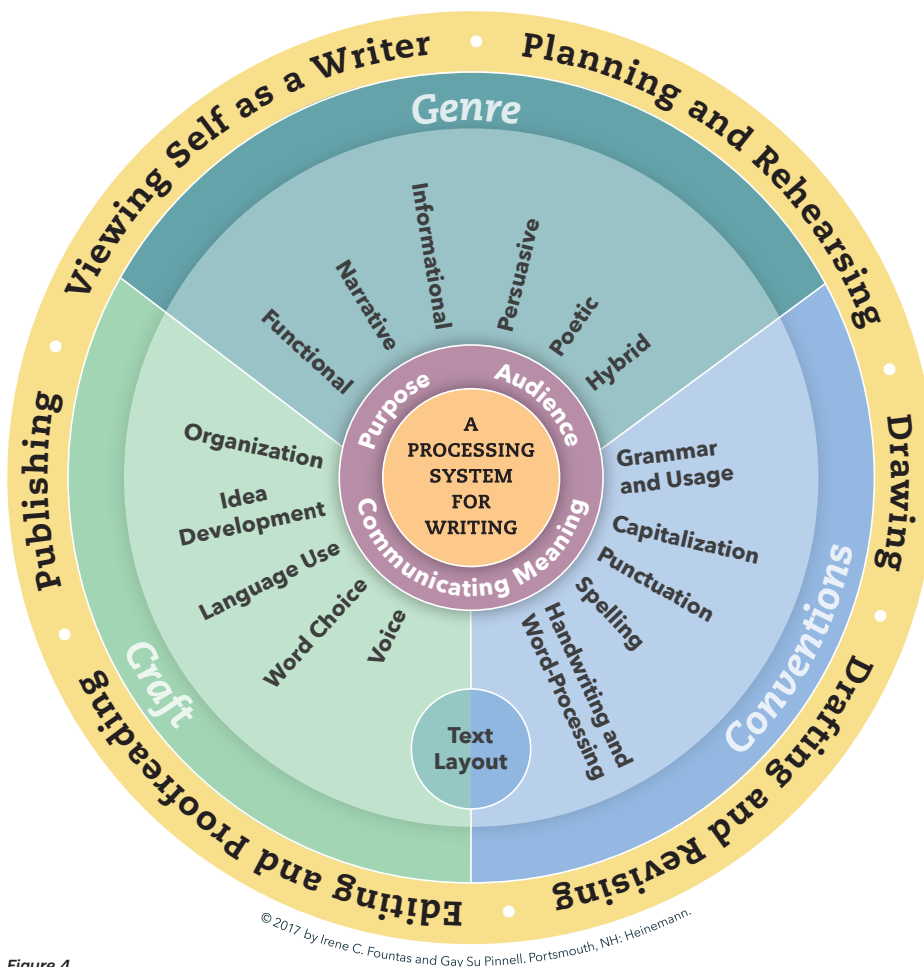

Figure 3

A Processing System for Writing

Figure 4

type of thinking is the reader's ability to solve words efficiently. A teacher's expertise in the teaching of word-solving actions–the use of letter–sound relationships, the analysis of word structure, and more–is critical.

Yet, a reader does much more. The reader brings information to the text that is not explicitly there. Thinking beyond the text enables the reader to understand the text more fully by considering what the writer has not stated but implied. Almost all texts require thinking beyond the text for true understanding.

Finally, readers are able to hold up the text as an object for critique and analysis. This thinking about the text places readers in the position of forming opinions, identifying literary qualities, detecting bias, seeing both sides of an argument, and analyzing plot and characters.

Writing Proficiency.
We can apply the same thinking to the writing process by looking at the charac-teristics of effective writing in a variety of genres for a variety of purposes and audiences. Our understanding of students as growing writers has expanded from a focus on conventions to looking closely at the developing writer's growth in craft and in understanding of genre (see Figure 4). Important, too, are the understandings related to planning, drafting, revising, and editing. People use written communication more than ever before, and although many modern ways of using written language are unconventional, a clear voice in writing is still important in helping the individual make his or her ideas count. So, too, is the ability to see oneself as a writer, one who uses writing for individual expression and a clear purpose.

Talking Proficiency.
Language infuses all of the reading and writing students do in the classroom, and as the base of literacy instruction, much talk is text-based. By encountering a rich

and the learning because there has been no responsiveness based on observation and assessment. Katz and Chard (1989) concluded that a homogeneous curriculum leads to heterogeneous outcomes, and if education systems want homogeneous outcomes, they will need to provide hetero-geneous opportunities to learn.

A Clear Vision of Proficiency in Reading, Writing, and Talking

With a strong picture of progress over time as the student engages in different kinds of reading and writing, you can prioritize emphases in your teaching. Your vision of what proficient reading, writing, and talking

look like (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017c) will lead your teaching forward.

Reading Proficiency.
Building on Clay's complex theory of literacy learning, we created a visual model of the unconscious, simultaneous, in-the-head stra-tegic actions that take place when a reader processes a continuous text (see Figure 3). We describe three types of thinking: within the text, beyond the text, and about the text.

When thinking within the text, the reader processes the information that is provided in the text to gain the basic or literal meaning. Thinking within the text enables the reader to understand essential information that the writer intended to convey. Essential to this

array of texts and learning to talk about the ideas, content, and literary elements, students find themselves using more complex syntax, reaching for new vocabulary, and articulating new ideas. As they link their daily lives to these ideas, they develop a richer understanding of themselves and their world as well as a voice to talk about it.

The areas of proficiency that we have discussed are complex, and it has taken us years of observation, research, and analysis to attempt a description of this vision in written form. The product of this effort is a continuum of literacy learning [Fountas & Pinnell, 2017b, 2017c]. *The Continuum* describes what steady growth toward literacy and language proficiency looks like. Specifically, it details text characteristics and behavioral goals for kindergarten through middle school across eight areas pertinent to the language arts. It is the *what* that we strive for in our teaching. As a tool, *The Continuum* enables a community of educators within a school to use a common language to work together toward common goals across classrooms and grade levels, to ensure coherence at each step in the student's literacy journey.

A Deep Knowledge of Texts, Their Characteristics, and Their Demands

A high level of teaching expertise requires turning an analytic eye on the texts that you select for your students. Instead of looking for one core text, we suggest that you consider a multitext approach. A multitext approach includes a variety of short or long texts, leveled or not leveled, used for different purposes [see Table 1]. A high-quality collection represents the diversity of the world in which children live.

You will need a lot of books, and you may need to collect them over time, but a high-quality book collection will never grow old! High-quality literature remains fresh year after year, and it presents challenges and delights to each new group of students. Over

A Multitext Approach

INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXT	TYPE OF TEXT	LEVELED TEXT?
Interactive Read-Aloud	• Short texts, usually picture books and occasional novels (organized in text sets) • Teacher-selected, age-appropriate, grade-appropriate complex texts that expand language, knowledge and thinking	No
Shared Reading	• Short texts (enlarged) and occasional novels or segment of a novel • Teacher-selected, age-appropriate, grade-appropriate texts that expand competencies and lead guided reading forward	No
Guided Reading	• Short texts and occasional longer texts • Teacher-selected texts that expand thinking within, beyond, and about a text	Yes
Book Clubs	• Short texts and some novels • Student-selected, age-appropriate, grade-appropriate, complex texts that expand thinking within, beyond, and about a text	No
Independent Reading	• Short texts and novels • Student-selected books, magazines, and digital texts that expand thinking within, beyond, and about a text	No

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Table 1

time, a multitext approach is economical and provides your students with maximum exposure to the richness and depth of ideas and perspectives found in fiction and nonfiction literature. A multitext approach gives students a great variety of experience and promotes flexibility in the range of opportunities for teaching and learning. The texts support extensive and intensive reading and writing opportunities. In a multitext approach, you will need the following types of texts for the following purposes.

A Collection of Beautiful Fiction and Nonfiction Texts for Interactive Read-Aloud. Each text is a high-quality example of excellence in its genre. These age-appropriate, grade-appropriate books stay in the classroom all year and serve as a rich

reservoir of texts that students share. Use them in the following ways:

- Read and discuss them, perhaps extending through writing, art, or drama.

- Make connections among different books and to students' own experiences by organizing text sets so students think deeply across a collection of texts and generalize literary concepts such as genre, writer's purpose, writer's craft, language, plot structure, character development, and expository structure.

- Pull them out again to use as mentor texts for reading and writing minilessons.

The texts become a foundation of shared literary experiences that expand the content knowledge, language, and vocabulary of the entire community of readers and writers.

A Group of Enlarged Texts for Shared Reading. Bringing students together as a reading community is enhanced by the use of shared examples that are accessible to all students because they are large enough for all to see the details of print and illustrations. The shared reading of a text begins with simple rhymes and songs in prekindergarten and continues every year, moving from the fiction and nonfiction "big books" that figure so strongly in creating early concepts of print in kindergarten and first grade to the shared reading of a variety of enlarged narrative, expository, and poetic texts (including choral performance and Readers Theatre) across the elementary grades.

A High-Quality Collection of Leveled Texts (A–Z+) Available for Teacher Use in Guided Reading. We have created a text gradient to support teachers in providing differentiated instruction, the *F&P Text Level Gradient*™ (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). As a teacher's tool, the gradient from A (easiest) to Z (most complex) can be used to select challenging books that will support new learning in a small group of students. Every student, every year, needs precise, high-powered teaching in reading to take on more complex texts and read them with accuracy, fluency, and deep comprehension. This teaching is responsive in that it is based on detailed observation and assessment of each student's reading behaviors and is calibrated to the cutting edge of the student's learning. The teacher's choice of a challenging text provides the opportunity for instruction to lead the reader's competencies forward.

A Collection of Related Texts That Students Choose, Read, and Discuss in Book Clubs. Talking with friends about books is one of the basic pleasures of living in a literate community. Students need to learn early the joy of sharing their thinking about texts, and there is no better way than deciding on a book worthy of discussion and meeting with a small group to share your thoughts and perspectives. Beginning in kindergarten, students talk to and listen to one another with a teacher present to provide unobtrusive guidance, focus, and support when needed. It is important that students are able to access all of the book choices. Some they read on their own; others, which may be more complex, they can hear read; but they are able to think and talk about all. They learn conversational conventions and the language of civil agreement and disagreement. They develop

> **"A highly responsive teaching meets students where they are and takes them where they need to go to next in their learning."**

opinions, with rationales; they engage in argument; they apply critical thinking; they recognize alternative perspectives. Overall, comprehension is expanded and enriched through this intensive, interactive literary experience.

A Classroom Library of Hundreds of Engaging Fiction and Nonfiction Texts That Give Students Choices for Extensive Independent Reading. All students need access to books to develop a reading life. Books are organized not by level but by topic, author, illustrator, genre, or some other attribute. Students have a choice book that they read during independent reading time (and usually one in reserve so the next choice is quick). By selecting and reading books of their own choosing, students develop habits, attitudes, and tastes as readers. They build mileage and stamina as they freely exercise full control of the reading process. Independent reading ignites and fuels their love for a literate life.

Analyzing and Evaluating Texts. Regardless of the type of text, each book is analyzed for the demands it places upon the readers in your classroom and the learning potential it holds in store for them. Each book is also evaluated for its capacity to engage and thrill individual readers. For each, ask questions such as these:

- What is the purpose of the text?
- What are the demands of the text?
- What features support and challenge readers at this time?
- What is the potential for learning about literacy, content, and the social world?
- How does the text reflect or expand the language and culture of the students?
- How can I use this text productively to engage the hearts and minds of the students I teach?

Expertise in Implementing a Range of Research-Based Instructional Practices

Every day, every student needs opportunities with a variety of texts at different levels through proven instructional practices. Responsive teaching meets students where they are and takes them where they need to go next in their learning. A highly complex process, responsive teaching is a constant cycle that takes place across multiple instructional contexts, as shown in Table 2 (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a). This process consists of five kinds of reading and five kinds of writing as well as direct, whole-class teaching of valuable reading, writing, phonics, and vocabulary.

To put together the complex building blocks discussed here, we consult our

Literacy Continuum (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017c), matching it with what we know about students through detailed, ongoing assessment. The result is a coordinated series of instructional contexts that take into account a student's current abilities but are designed to stretch the student in new ways every day. Picture this happening for every student in every classroom, every day and across the years in your school. Picture students helping one another–all interested in what others have to say. They talk about ideas and principles; they know how to form opinions, value them, and sometimes rethink them in response to new information. This vision is a way of assuring thoughtful, literate, and socially responsible young people moving into our society.

Element 4: A Culture of Continuous Professional Learning

Effective teaching is complex and demanding. It requires far more expertise, information, resources, and problem solving than any one of us could have alone. We can have an inspired vision, common goals and language, and high levels of expertise, but we also need a healthy culture to continue to build our professional capacity and to sustain our teaching year after year. When we participate in a professional school community that values teacher expertise as the single most important factor related to student outcomes and

when the systems in the school foster collaboration, conversation, communication, and interdependence, we all grow. A culture of reflective practice fuels mutual energy, fosters teacher agency, encourages acts of leadership by individuals, and promotes the kind of generous teamwork that benefits everyone (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Teachers see themselves as playing a key role in one another's learning as well as committing to their own learning. We all support one another in our accountability to our students and their families.

All of this means establishing a culture of sharing and open classroom doors. We have mutual expectations for a high level of professional interaction.

Beginning teachers receive thoughtful support, and experienced teachers reflect on and refine their practice; materials are shared; the analysis of data becomes a

Instructional Contexts for Literacy Teaching and Learning

	READING	WRITING	PHONICS/ WORD STUDY	
WHOLE GROUP	**Interactive Read-Aloud** delivers the language of literacy to students. Freed from decoding, students at all ages are free to enjoy texts and engage in analytical thinking about them.	In **Modeled Writing**, the teacher demonstrates the process of writing in a particular genre, often thinking aloud to reveal the purposeful decisions that are made throughout the composition, editing, and revision of a piece of writing.		
	Reading Minilessons are concise, explicit lessons about a practical principle that students can apply to their own independent reading.	**Writing Minilessons** provide short and explicit instruction to help students understand the characteristics of effective writing and write in a variety of genres with purpose and voice. Each minilesson engages students in inquiry that leads to the discovery and understanding of a general principle.	**Vocabulary** is developed across all contexts, which include specific revisiting of the text to examine new words in context.	During **Phonics/Spelling/ Word Study lessons**, the teacher provides short, explicit, inquiry-based instruction to help students learn about and efficiently use sounds, letters, and words.
	During **Shared Reading**, students participate in the reading of a common, enlarged text. During subsequent readings, students discuss the text and the teacher selects teaching points based on students' needs.	**Shared Writing** means inviting students to collaboratively compose a message, story, or informational text. The teacher is the scribe. Freed from the mechanics of constructing words and sentences, students can produce language to represent their ideas.	**Interactive Writing** is the same as Shared Writing with one exception: the teacher occasionally "shares the pen" at carefully selected points in the text that have high instructional value.	

Table 2   [continued]

> **"**We can have an inspired vision, common goals and language, and high levels of expertise, but we also need a healthy culture to continue to build our professional capacity and to sustain our teaching year after year.**"**

shared reflective process; decisions are made with the highest value placed on evidence of student progress.

Instructional Contexts for Literacy Teaching and Learning *(continued)*

	READING	WRITING	PHONICS/ WORD STUDY
SMALL GROUP	During **Guided Reading**, students in a small-group setting individually read a text that the teacher has selected and introduced. You provide teaching points across the lesson to support students in building in-the-head networks of strategic actions for processing increasingly challenging texts.	**Guided Writing** makes instruction more efficient. Students continue working on their own pieces, but you bring together a small temporary group who need to work on the same aspect of writing—conventions or craft. Using a minilesson structure—teach, have a try, apply, and share—you tune into the needs of a small group.	
	During **Book Clubs**, students meet in small, heterogeneous groups to discuss a book that they have all read or listened to. Through sharing their thinking, they build a richer understanding than any one student could gain from independent reading alone.		**Phonics/Spelling/ Word Study application** is an activity in which small groups, partners, or individuals explore the principle and then share their discoveries. An inquiry approach makes the work interesting and investigative.
INDIVIDUAL	**Independent Reading** is a period of time during which students read books that they choose from the classroom library. Booktalks, minilessons, brief reading conferences, and opportunities to share thinking support students' engagement with books and increase their competencies.	**Independent Writing** is a daily, structured time that provides students with an ongoing opportunity to develop their own pieces of writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. Students select their own topics and compose the language for themselves. The teacher provides brief writing conferences to support each child.	

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Table 2

In our work, we see teachers who take pride in being lifelong learners; everyone has goals and is not afraid to ask colleagues for help. The culture of the school is filled with trust, transparency, respect, and generous teamwork.

Consider gathering together each month as a group of grade-level teachers, or as a primary, intermediate, or disciplinary team, to focus on your professional learning and development. Maximize opportunities for collaboration. Before school begins, create a calendar of meeting dates that do not interfere with staff meetings and other school commitments. Establish an agenda for each meeting, as it will help you focus on appropriate goals and get the most out of your time together.

In our years of work, we have found that well-trained coaches and teacher leaders, in partnership with the principal, have played a key role in fostering the kind of learning organization the educators envision. They become models and partners in reflective practice and provide the kind of support to each member of the team that enables everyone to reach for new professional goals each year. When your school is a dynamic learning organization, every educator understands and commits to his or her role in and responsibility for helping one another achieve the vision and goals that they have created.

Every Child, Every Classroom, Every Day

It is not as hard as it sounds. As you read this article, you will find that you have much expertise already. Your school may already be engaging in many of these practices, so much is already in place. Look at what you do and what you want to do in your school and district so you can turn your inspirational vision into action that results in evidence of improved teaching and learning. Getting there is, in itself, a systematic process of reflecting on the system as it works now.

- What do you see as your existing strengths?
- What do you see as challenges?
- What do you want to accomplish?
- How can you get there, step-by-step?
- How will your decisions affect the system as a whole (students, teachers, administrators, and families)?
- What are the language and literacy opportunities you can guarantee each student?
- How will data provide feedback?
- How will you measure success?

The key is implementation of the good ideas–trying them on with care, studying them over time, and getting better and better. Many great ideas flounder and fail because of weak implementation. We need to get away from terms such as *school reform* and to stop expecting that the adoption of a new set of standards or the purchase of a new core program will fix everything overnight. It is not a process of fixing; it is a process of studying, improving, and becoming a learning organization. The work of Bryk et al. (2015) on learning to improve has presented a learning process in which schools get better at getting better. The school becomes a self-extending system because of how the system operates. As expertise increases and success occurs, learning accelerates.

Your vision of literacy teaching and learning will not happen overnight, but it will happen. Avoid bandwagons and quick, easy fixes. Keep a determined eye on creating and sustaining the system in such a way that enables every child, in every classroom, every day to love literacy and learning and to achieve his or her hopes and dreams.

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