Designing a Practical Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers

by

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Abstract

“Learning to read is arguably a child’s most crucial academic achievement, while teaching reading is perhaps a teacher’s most complex and challenging endeavor” (Kent, Giles, & Hibberts, 2013, p.1). New teachers are not equipped with the knowledge, understanding, and experience of teaching reading. This may include some or all of reading theory, strategies (including practical resources), a reading framework and implementation of plans. By exploring empirical research on the significance of early literacy, the elements of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, oral language, concepts of print, and reciprocity), the new BC curriculum, and the struggles of new K-3 teachers, a website was created to support teachers in understanding and developing their classroom reading program. Kelly Inglis and I co-designed and developed the website for new K-3 teachers to have the resources they need to implement a research-based, systematic and inclusive reading program in their classrooms to meet the differentiated needs of all their learners. The website describes a daily framework (with an overview, specific grade level exemplars, and resources), balanced literacy, early learning, and a detailed exploration of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary (including what and why, how, assessment, resources, and utilizing the framework). Imbedded throughout are ready to use lesson plans, templates, forms, and videos to help guide and support teachers as they build a reading roadmap towards life-long readers in their classroom.
Acknowledgements

Once upon a time, there were three friends. Together they planted a seed that grew, which led them to climb the highest beanstalk and overcome any obstacles in their path. This led them to find the key to live happily ever after... they just had to keep the magic alive.

I would like to thank my family and friends who have shown their continued support through this remarkable journey. Long before I took the initial step to achieving this important milestone, your words of support, encouragement, and belief in me were what got me to the point that I am today. To Lisa Frey, Lisa De Oliveira, and Lynn Yanow; thank you for believing in me at a time where I did not believe in myself, for picking me up and making me whole again. Thank you to Sean Toal and Wendy Simms for their passionate and enthusiastic support along this journey. Thank you also to Shari Worsfold for all the nudges to expand our research and suggestions for creating a more encompassing website. Finally, to my Master-partner in crime, Kelly Inglis. Who knew that a coffee date early in the fall of 2018 would embark us together on a journey that has been nothing but awe-inspiring. Your passion and dedication as an educator and spokesperson for students who need to be loved first and taught second, is empowering. Words cannot express how honored I am to have completed this together. Tears may have flowed but only from the laughter.

I have always said, “When I grow up I want to become a principal!” I have realized that nothing could be further from the truth. I learned everything I needed to know to be a successful leader, in Kindergarten: to be honest, to be vulnerable, to share, to take risks, to say please and thank you, to nap, and most importantly....to always make time to play. Walt Disney said it best: “that’s the real trouble with the world, too many people grow up.” My job is to help others plant their seeds and make sure the magic stays alive.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to teachers who feel they are never good enough, never worthy enough, and never strong enough. Let your light shine and hold it high. You are everything those students need and more. Surround yourself with those that ignite your spark and help you grow. Those students are so lucky to have you as their guide. Finally and most importantly, this master’s is dedicated to my soul mate, my partner in crime, and the person who makes me whole: my husband Lee Cairns. This master’s is as much yours as it is mine; for without you, this would have still been a dream instead of a reality. We did it babe I love you.
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Chapter One: Introduction

General Introduction

Standing in front of my first classroom of students as a new British Columbia teacher, I was terrified. I had spent 5 years in University preparing and dreaming of this moment. The University deemed me, after all, to be ready. I, in fact, felt the exact opposite. My heart was racing, my vision was narrowing and sweat was pouring down my back. Was I going to mentally or physically survive this? Did I even want to do this anymore? A statement made by one of my final year professor’s came flooding back to me: “within the next five years, 80% of you will no longer be teaching.” In fact, Levine (2006) reported that 62% of new teachers report feeling underprepared for the realities they face in the classroom. Scanning the class, I took in the enormity of my job. “How am I going to teach them how to read?” I thought. Some knew a few letters, some could read beginner books and some were honestly just hungry and could care less what sound the letter “A” makes. In that moment, my degree meant nothing. All the textbooks, the countless programs, frameworks, and colleague advice just roared overwhelmingly in my ears. As a qualified teacher with excellent practicums and grades, I was drowning in a ritual all too familiar with many new teachers. All I needed and desperately wanted was a lifejacket, but there was none that I could readily cling too. It is easy to see why the burn out rate is so high in our field as educators. Not feeling knowledgeable enough to teach perpetuates stress and emotional exhaustion, which leads to burn out. Herman, Hickmon-Rosa and Reinke (2018) stated that the demands of the job, combined with the lack of resources to meet those demands, caused low levels of self-efficacy (the ability to create an adequate learning environment and to deliver academic instruction). They go on to say that burn out is also linked to teacher turnover rates with half of all teachers leaving teaching within the first 5 years. New teachers are coming
out of University with an enthusiasm to teach and learn but they have a finite amount of time in
the day to do it. By providing a reading framework to new K-3 teachers that is easy to follow and
implement, it frees up time and negates some of the stress associated with learning how to teach
reading.

**How to Teach Reading**

Teaching reading requires an understanding of the important elements in learning how to read: phonemic awareness, phonics, oral language, concepts of print, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Phonemic awareness is the ability to distinguish, isolate, and manipulate sounds within a word. Phonics is the connection between a student’s phonemic awareness to spelling patterns of individual letter sounds or groups of letters, in order to decode words. Oral language is the ability to express our emotions, thoughts, and intellect using spoken words (Lesaux and Harris 2015). Concepts of print is an understanding of how “print” works in the written form. Fluency is the ability to read with automaticity, accuracy, and oral expression. Briggs and Forbes (2002) describe fluency as acquiring acquisition: through a student’s understanding of the structure of oral language, they can use the predictability of language to construct the order of the words. Comprehension is decoding the text while simultaneously understanding and making a connection to what is being read. Vocabulary is having the knowledge base of what words mean in order to make those deep connections to the text. Cassidy, Valadez, and Garrett (2010) describe important elements of reading that form the foundation of classroom reading instruction. Even with a clear understanding of these elements of reading, there are still best practice strategies to learn as well as an understanding of how to teach them. Snow and Griffin (1998) state that reading is generally embedded for pre-service teachers within one course designed to teach Language Arts but the amount of time focused directly on reading instruction
is limited. Reading instruction should be an explicit course taught on its own. There are so many workshops, textbooks, and other resources available, with varied methodologies that are widely different in their approach to instruction in the classroom. In essence, there is a lot of “what” to teach, “how” to teach, and when to teach, but it’s the combination and implementation in the actual classroom in a concise, easy to follow manner that becomes the issue. Designing a structure for how and when to teach the elements of reading in the classroom must be learned; by thorough reading, understanding, and the ability to then implement, which most new teachers are missing fresh out of University. As Scale et al. (2017) pointed out; understanding how to implement a reading program could be accomplished if Universities explicitly connected theory to practices while making connections from coursework to practicums. Without these explicit literacy connections between University and field work, new teachers struggle to plan and instruct because they are overwhelmed at trying to put the pieces together on their own. Yet as Duke and Block (2012) pointed out, another hurdle is the fact that in addition to lacking course work, new teachers lack the expertise required to develop reading skills including “vocabulary, conceptual and content knowledge, and comprehension in their students” (p.67). Learning how to explicitly teach reading can be overwhelming on its own but in 2015, British Columbia redesigned the curriculum to explore big ideas and less prescribed objectives.

**British Columbia’s New Curriculum**

The newly redesigned British Columbia Curriculum, has shifted to be more inquiry based with emphasis on core competencies (while no longer providing a specific point form list of necessary items to teach in Language Arts). The curriculum has been designed based on process/thinking they would like students to learn to do, rather than content knowledge that they
know children can find easily online. The British Columbia Ministry of Education (2013) developed the new curriculum to include:

Five design elements (curriculum organizers, big ideas [enduring understandings], learning standards, competency links, and implementation links). These elements, along with fewer outcomes, were intended to make a more flexible curriculum that is less prescriptive while giving more focus to higher order learning. (p.3)

As fantastic as this is, it does a disservice to new teachers who require a more explicated approach to teaching reading to students. New teachers face the daunting task of designing and implementing a reading program.

**A Reading Framework**

The Reading Framework used on the website is researched based, using best practices to guide teachers while leaving it fairly flexible and open for teachers to implement in their own classroom based on their needs. Teachers first instruct a whole group lesson. Next, students independently read for long periods of time (as the teacher provides individualized or group instruction); practicing their strategies and skills while also increasing their stamina. While students are independently working, the teacher focuses on individuals or groups and/or conferences with students (Boushey & Moser, 2012). Foorman and Torgesen (2001) found that increasing instructional reading time benefited both regular and mild at-risk students, while the small group or one on one instruction also helped very at-risk students. This Reading Framework supports differentiated learning in the classroom which is critical for maximizing student growth.

**Context**

During my final year as a Bachelor of Education student, we were given the opportunity to complete our studies in the previous summer, with the focus on our practicum from September
to February. This allowed us to extend our student teaching time to include three full months of full time teaching. It also allowed us to have a specialized learning support strand of courses during those summer months which I felt were an invaluable asset as a new k-7 teacher. Incredibly, even with the learning support strand (including concentrations on Level-B Assessments, Mathematics, and Language Arts) a course outlining how to teach reading was never offered. In fact, if you were to ask the majority of certified teachers, they would say that learning how to teach reading was not a focus in our educational programs for preservice educators. Washburn et al. (2010) supports the issue that competent, experienced, and knowledgeable preservice teachers in University are not given enough instruction on how to teach early reading.

Even with my passion and desire fueling me to be the most effective teacher I could become, my first few years teaching primary grade classrooms were a struggle. It took me years of self-reflection, observations, conferences, and professional development courses to gain an understanding of what best practices are necessary to be an effective reading teacher. Along that learning journey I too succumbed to teacher burn out. If it wasn’t for the nurturing of a select few colleagues, along with the mentorship of an administrator who believed in me, I would not be in the position I am today as an educator. In fact, in my role as a Literacy Coordinator for the Nanaimo Ladysmith Public School District (NLPS), I still did not feel remotely close to being an expert in the field. Although it was my job to help support colleagues and students at two schools in the district, I am continuously learning more about how to teach reading.

The schools that Literacy Coordinators work with have been labeled Focus Schools with a higher percentage of students reading and writing at a substantially lower level than other schools. Four new Literacy Coordinators were hired in 2018 to support these focus schools. All
four of us have been shocked at the commonality we see at all the schools: teachers are unequipped with the necessary knowledge and practice to design a classroom reading program. These colleagues (and many other colleagues not teaching at a focus school) have expressed how the lack of training and the time to implement what they’ve learned, have increased their stress to burn out levels. It has nothing to do with a lack of effort, enthusiasm or capability to teach. It comes down to the need for a lifejacket on how to teach reading with a clear easy roadmap of what, when and how to implement it. Valencia (2006) stated that “teachers need support in assessing students’ needs, identifying appropriate material, and then planning for and managing small groups of learners” (p.118), while being efficient and easy to use so that new teachers can implement it in their classrooms.

To go even further, as a future administrator, it is important to know the framework or guiding principles of best practice in a reading program. How can you lead by example, create change or build capacity within your own school building if you don’t have an understanding of what needs to happen? Taking our Masters in Educational Leadership together, Kelly Inglis and I (both Literacy Coordinators for NLPS) realized we were in a unique situation to provide support to new K-3 teachers in our District. Along this journey, I am excited to propel my own learning and understanding of the elements of a reading program, as well as how to design a website, in order to build capacity amongst my colleagues within their own schools and classrooms. It is my hope that fewer ‘life jackets’ will be required as a result of our endeavors. I know if I had access to a life jacket when I started, my journey would have been very different.

Problem Statement

The problem guiding this major project is that new teachers are not equipped with the knowledge, understanding, and experience of teaching reading. This may include some or all of
reading theory, strategies (including practical resources), a Reading Framework and implementation plans.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project is to design a website that is a practical *Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers*. The focus is on creating a reading framework developed from literary reviews based on best practices. I want to help support new teachers by creating that lifejacket I desperately needed when teaching reading in their classrooms. This framework will be easy to follow and allow for immediate implementation. The website (www.readingroadmap.ca), called *A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers*, will include a brief and concise statement of the elements in learning how to read, strategies that support best practices for each of these areas, how to scaffold and link the strategies and elements together while connecting it to the new British Columbia Curriculum. Just like navigating a roadmap, it will guide teachers in how to design a practical reading program for their own classroom (see Figure 1 below).

![Reading Roadmap Framework](image)

*Figure 1: A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers Framework*
Justification of Project

By designing the website, we are addressing a current need of supporting and improving new teacher’s practice while providing a service to all teachers. The outcome will be creating positive change for students who are on the receiving end in the classroom. The ripple effect will be widespread for new teachers as they continually grow and collaborate, rippling outwards by creating an environment for students whose future academic successes will be exponentially higher.

Guiding Question

How can a website be designed to support new K-3 teachers in understanding and developing their classroom reading program?

Definition of Key Terms

New Teachers are teachers who are within the first 5 years of their career in these situations: new to the profession, a teacher teaching on call (TTOC), a significant change or new classroom assignment, a new teacher to BC or a teacher returning after an absence (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, n.d.).

Literacy Coordinator is a coach in partnership with teachers and administrators to help develop teachers’ understanding of literacy theory, methodology and practice. To help embed those learning opportunities within the classroom, create trust in the partnership and help support teachers through the process (Toll, 2014).

Focus Schools are schools that have significant achievement gaps compared to other schools in the district. They are schools that would benefit from additional support and resources to improve achievement in the defined area of concern (“Title I Focus Schools,” 2017).
**Reading Strategies** are goal specific actions that help the reader’s efforts in learning how to read through things such as decoding, understanding and construction of meaning (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008), as well as thinking strategies (self-monitoring, searching, cross checking and self-correcting) that will aid in problem solving new words.

**Reading Framework** is a structure to guide teachers in creating an independent and engaging literacy environment in the classroom. Imbedded within the framework are the lessons and strategies (Michell, 2015).

**Research-based Practice** is a term used to describe techniques and or approaches that help with the development of students’ reading abilities. These include practices that have been linked over time to help achieve proficiency as readers (Roskos & Neuman, 2014).

**Burn out** is used to describe an educator who may be physically and mentally exhausted with feelings of low self-efficacy (Roloff & Brown, 2011).

**Self-efficacy** relates both to the ability to create an adequate learning environment and to deliver academic instruction. An important aspect of teacher efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to successfully teach children who are at risk for school failure because of their behavior, family background, or other external factors (Pas et al, 2012 p.130).

**Differentiated Instruction (DI)** is a flexible approach to teaching in which a teacher plans and carries out varied approaches to address content, learning processes, learning style, practical procedures, presentation strategies, and assessment tools. It results in a more personal, proactive learning environment, inclusive of a wide variety of learners BC Ministry of Education. (2018a).

**Conclusion**

In chapter one, I discuss the predicament facing new teachers when teaching students how to read and the clear need for a manageable roadmap to teaching reading that can be used by
new teachers. In chapter two, I will review the literature surrounding early literacy (K-3) and what the research suggests are important elements of an effective reading program, introduce the new British Columbia curriculum from a new teacher’s perspective, and expand on new teachers’ lack of knowledge in teaching literacy including the dropout rate, struggles, and support needed for teachers in education programs. Chapter three will explain why Kelly Inglis and I chose to work on creating a website together, the project design and description, the rationale and considerations behind the development and design of *A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers*, and our timetable for website completion. Chapter four includes an active link to the website which will have the main structure ready for use by new teachers. In chapter five I reflect on my learning, present a summary, and propose the limitations of our website. It will also include our next steps.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this project is to design *A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers* using research-based theory to develop a website that teachers can access for information and practices designed for teaching reading. A literature review was conducted by starting with a wider scope of what comprises early literacy, including the significance of kindergarten to grade three and student struggles in learning how to read. Following this, some key elements in learning how to read are discussed, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, oral language, concepts about print, and the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing. With an understanding of what explicit instruction in K-3 literacy looks like, the focus of the literature review shifts to British Columbia’s new curriculum and implementing it into practice. Narrowing the research even further, the final section addresses new K-3 teachers and the challenges they face in teaching children how to read while juggling administrative, student, and parental expectations, inclusive classrooms filled with diverse learners, and poor self-efficacy due to a lack of support. As a result of this research, the website *A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers* was developed to support new K-3 teachers teaching students to read in British Columbia.

**Early Literacy**

Research shows that early literacy development is one of the most important foundational components linked to establishing ongoing success in a student’s education (Cunningham, & Stanovich, 1997; Reutzel, 2015; Snow & Griffin, 1998). This development takes place in the critical years of kindergarten through to grade three. These early grades are classified as the primary years (k-3) in elementary school. Primary-grade teachers have one of the hardest and yet most rewarding jobs within the education system: the additional challenge of teaching students to
read at the acquisition stage of learning to read, setting them up for positive experiences as they continue their education. Reutzel (2015) noted that “if the foundations of literacy are secured early on, then students are placed on a trajectory leading to probable academic success in later schooling” (p.22). Moreover, the detection of learning difficulties in reading for students in early years is vital as it allows for interventions to start sooner rather than later (Snow & Griffin, 1998; Virinkoski, Lerkkanen, Holopainen, Eklund, & Aro, 2018). A study conducted by Stahl and Yaden (2004) noted that students who had success in reading skills in kindergarten through first grade showed significant growth later on in their education in comparison to those students who started later. This highlights the importance of establishing specific instruction in a literacy rich environment for success in later years of schooling (Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2014). A literacy rich environment also includes fostering a love of reading, and helping students develop positive and effective habits for learning how to read. For those students who are falling behind their peers in grade one, a positive outcome can be achieved if they can catch up to their peers by the end of grade three. Sparks et al., (2014) go on to state:

As early as first grade…children with strong early reading skills engage in reading more than their less skilled peers…they strengthen not only their reading skills but also reading-related and cognitive skills such as spelling, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and declarative knowledge. (p.209)

In fact, research by Sparks et al., (2014) showed that first grade reading skills are a strong indicator for a student’s grade ten achievement, including “parts of speech, grammatical structures, rules of written English, sentence structure and styles, and approached significance in predicting reading comprehension skill and declarative knowledge” (p.207). Mather, Bos, and Babur (2001) drew similar conclusions, stating that 75% of students who still struggle by the end
of grade three continue to have poor reading skills at the end of high school. Each primary grade scaffolds onto the next to create a solid foundation of literacy education.

**Significance of K-3.** Ask any kindergarten and grade one teacher what their number one responsibility is and they will tell you it is developing readers (Snow & Griffin, 1998). Slavin, Lake, Chambers, Cheung, and Davis (2009) indicated that by the end of grade one, students have learned “all the basic skills of turning print into meaning” (p.1398). This includes knowing all the letters and sounds, combining them to create words, reading common sight words well as understanding basic text. Early Literacy teachers must also teach and rehearse (through gradual release of responsibility) an understanding of oral language, concepts of print, as well as research-based cognitive strategies to provide a well-rounded reading program vital to the success of their students (Clay, 2004; Reutzel, 2015; NELP, 2008; Briggs & Forbes, 2002; Hill, 2008). For second and third grade teachers, the challenge is to layer fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, and oral language skills on to the basic reading skills achieved in kindergarten to grade one (Slavin et al., 2009). Snow and Griffin (1998) suggested these grades are pivotal: “the curriculum must be designed with due recognition that students’ higher-order comprehension can be limited not only by the presence or absence but also by the automaticity of lower-level skills” (p.210). By second grade, and even more so in third grade, students need to have the skills required to be reading fluently with comprehension (fluency begins in grade one on appropriate levels of text and then those skills need to become more proficient on text of ever increasing difficulty). Moving forward, this basic skill set is necessary as they must be able to consolidate and compartmentalize their reading abilities in order to start navigating how to become more proficient, fluent readers (Slavin et al., 2009). During the primary period of learning how to read, students must develop and practice alongside supportive and
knowledgeable teachers who have learned how to scaffold learning appropriately. Stahl and Yaden (2004), felt this was necessary in order to expand and solidify students’ knowledge to help them comprehend the text they are reading. Given the significance of the early years, there is a lot at stake to make sure all students achieve success at each grade level. Students do not necessarily learn at the same rate as their peers, and many students will struggle and require expert support in order for them to continue learning and keep pace with their peers. Snow and Griffith (1998) concluded that “given the current variability in commitment to kindergarten literacy preparation and the widely varying capacities and needs in any group of first graders, this is a challenge whose importance is exceeded only by its complexity” (p.194).

**Student Struggles.** Students who enter the school system generally enter it with positive attitudes towards learning how to read. The variation of exposure to text will be high, and it is the teacher’s job to determine the needs and starting points of each individual learner. To the experienced teacher, this understanding is an easier task to accomplish compared to a new teacher who has never experienced the variation in text exposure students’ may have, prior to their first classroom. Students who begin to struggle with reading early on in the process will start forming a potentially negative opinion about reading itself. Snow and Griffin (1998) highlighted the notion that students who begin to struggle will soon be at risk for developing a poor reading skillset. This can also be caused due to poor self-perception because they see themselves struggling more than their peers. Sparks et al., (2014) also noted that students who struggle with the early reading skillset find it boring (or difficult) and start using avoidance-seeking behaviors when it comes to continuing to learn how to read. This in itself can start a continuous cycle of reading failures that have implications for any further development and future school success in the later years until graduation. Pulido and Hambrick (2008) found that
the learning to read cycle is both “vicious” and “virtuous” in that you need to read in order to be a better reader, and in order to be a better reader you need to read. They both go hand in hand without fail. It is a delicate dance primary teacher’s face every day in their kindergarten to grade three classrooms. As Slavin et al., (2009) said:

Those who succeed in becoming fluent, strategic, and joyful readers are not guaranteed success in school or in life, but they are well on their way. However, those who do not succeed in reading, or who become reluctant readers, face long odds in achieving success in school and life. Every educator, parent, and policy maker knows the critical importance of reading in the elementary grade. (p.1391)

The pressure facing primary teachers can feel insurmountable given the task at hand. For new teachers who may be unaware of what is required for students to achieve literary success, this pressure is multiplied. It is vital that new teachers have the knowledge and skill set necessary to implement a strong and effective reading program into their primary classroom: one that includes several elements necessary for reading success to transpire.

**Important Elements of Reading Instruction**

Over the last 30 years, research has made a dramatic shift in what it considers to be important in learning to read. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, research looked at “reading methods”; the 1980’s brought about “process-product relationships”; and the 1990’s focused on “best practices”. The 2000’s started to look at a need for more “evidence-based research” which continues to the present (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Current research has found that there are important key elements in a reading program: phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, & Griffin, 1998; Duke, Cervetti, & Wise, 2018; Cassidy et al., 2010; Foorman, & Torgesen, 2001; Boushey & Moser,
Chall (1967) as cited in Snow, and Griffin, (1998), continues to be one of the classics used when discussing the necessary components for learning how to read. In her research, Chall (1967) found that reading programs which included the above 5 elements were consistently at an advantage in reading achievement until at least the end of grade three. Cassidy et al., (2010) classified the elements as the “pillars of reading and instruction and the cement that held these pillars up was scientific evidence-based research” (p.644). Moreover, Foorman and Torgesen (2001) stated that the components taught should remain the same regardless of whether or not they were for the regular classroom or at-risk students. Further research has shown that the five elements discussed above are not the only elements necessary in a balanced, encompassing reading program. Other researchers argue that oral language, concepts about print, and reciprocity between reading and writing, are also necessary (Reutzel, 2015; NELP, 2008; Doyle, 2013; Hill, 2008; Hill, 2010; Fillmore, & Snow, 2000; Clay, 2004; Fried, 2006). To gain a clearer understanding of these elements, each of the elements discussed are highlighted below to define what it is, how it is used in practice, and why it matters (see figure 2 below).
**Phonemic Awareness.** A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that makes up the spoken language. Phonemic Awareness (PA), is the ability to recognize and manipulate phonemes that are strung together to form or create spoken words (Cassidy et al., 2010; Ehri et al. 2001; Yopp & Yopp, 2000; Wilson, & Colmar, 2008). Ehri et al. (2001) points out that in our English language, there are roughly 41 phonemes. Most of our words are formed using a combination of phonemes, such as the word of (o/-/f/) that has 2 phonemes and the word take (t/-/a/-/ke/) that has 3 phonemes. There are only a few English words that contain one phoneme, such as the word /a/.

Once a student acquires PA, they are able to understand and differentiate words that change meaning based on the order of phonemes present to create or sound that word out. For example, a student that can sound out the 3 phonemes to say log (l/-/o/-/g/) should be able to recognize that replacing the first phoneme with a “d” changes that word to dog(d/-/o/-/g/), which has a very different meaning. As Yopp and Yopp (2000) noted, those students who are phonemically aware are able to sequence and stream these sounds together as “they can identify the three sounds in the spoken word fish (f/-/i/-/sh/). They have the ability to notice, mentally grab ahold of, and manipulate these smallest chunks of speech” (p.130). Students can start showcasing this ability by exploring words that rhyme. By taking a word like “pan” and dividing it into two parts: “p” (onset-consonant before the vowel) and “an” (rime-vowel and rest of the divided word), students can substitute out the onset phoneme to create new words with the rhyme (Wilson, & Colmar, 2008). Teachers build upon this PA in early literacy classes by using a number of strategies and assessments for individualized needs. In fact, The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that “phonemic awareness and letter knowledge [are] the two best school-entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during their first 2 years in school” (p.2-1).
Ehri et al. (2001) discussed many different tasks that are utilized to understand a student's knowledge of PA and what instruction is required to master PA. Six main themes are elaborated on, including phoneme isolation, phoneme identity, phoneme categorization, phoneme blending, phoneme segmentation, and phoneme deletion. By assessing students’ ability to do each of these tasks, teachers can then instruct to the gaps missing in a student’s acquisition of PA. In other words, as Spencer, Schuele, Guillot, and Lee (2008) indicated, the use of PA is learned in such a way that a student must prove their ability to highlight specific sounds within a word. Teachers must be able to understand the complexities of phonemes and PA in order to teach it explicitly. When instructing a student to segment a word such as “pant,” it is easy to see it has 4 sounds or phonemes, /p/-/a/-/n/-/t/. However, according to Spencer et al., (2008), their research indicated that almost all teachers in their study segmented the word “box” as 3 sounds instead of the 4 sounds present, /b/-/o/-/k/-/s/. This confusion about how many phonemes exist can be confusing to students as beginning readers. PA, therefore, must be explicitly taught so that students can advance their reading.

The English Language is an alphabetic system that records the phonemes spoken into print. This is why PA helps students’ learn how to read (Ehri et al. 2001; Wilson & Colmar, 2008; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Wilson and Colmar (2008) stated it is “pedagogically positioned alongside phonics instruction, which focuses on teaching the letter-sound relationships in written language for the purpose of learning to read and write” (p.93). In general, the instruction of PA happens in the earlier grades of kindergarten and grade one. As students’ progress and develop more complex patterns of learning how to spell words, PA becomes less and less of a focus, yet still remains embedded in reading comprehension instruction, vocabulary, reading strategies, decoding, and writing (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). For those at-risk students, PA may still need to be
an important part of their learning to read, no matter their age (Ehri et al., 2001). Moreover, Wilson and Colmar (2008) noted the importance of “blending, segmenting and manipulating compound words, syllables, and onsets and rimes to further develop children’s capacity to process large sound units before making the important transition to linking these sounds to their printed form” (p.91). This process of development parallels phonics instruction. In fact, explicit instruction in both PA and phonics within a classroom increased students reading achievement who had low PA and/or word skillsets (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001).

**Phonics.** Phonics is an explicit way of teaching students to turn letters into sounds (phonemes) and blend those sounds together to formulate or decode words (National Reading Panel, 2000; Wilson, and Colmar, 2008; Yopp & Yopp, 2000; Glazzard, 2017).

Research has indicated that systematic phonics instruction has the most impact on student reading growth (NICHD, 2000; Johnston & Watson, 2004; Torgerson, Brooks & Hall, 2006; Ehri & Flugman, 2018; National Reading Panel, 2000). The national Reading Panel (2000), defined systematic phonics instruction as “explicitly teaching students a pre-specified set of letter-sound relations and having students read text that provides practice using these relations to decode words” (2-92). While this suggests that there is one specific way to teach systematic phonics, there are many programs that teachers may decide to use within their own classroom. Systematic phonics instruction is not a particular program, but a system designed to teach the letter-sound relationships through activities and materials. Students participate in the activities and instruction, with repeated practice to read and write the targeted words (Villaume & Brabham, 2003). In order to recognize, read, and write these targeted words, students must have “both auditory and visual discrimination skills” (Glazzard, 2017, p.51). Glazzard (2017) stated this includes visually seeing the difference between shapes of letters (graphemes) and whole words,
as well as being able to properly pronounce and memorize them. Through the explicit, systematic instruction of phonics, students are provided with key understandings that they can apply to both reading and writing. They are able to blend sounds to formulate a word, and dismantle the word to formulate the individual sounds in pursuit of mastering decoding (National Reading Panel, 2000; Villaume & Brabham, 2003; Glazzard, 2017). The goal of systematic phonics is for students to understand the alphabetic principle: “that the sounds of spoken words are mapped onto written words in systematic ways” (Villaume & Brabham, 2003, p.478).

Students use the alphabetic principle to help decipher and decode unknown words. It also helps form a word bank of familiar words that become increasingly automatic to recognize. Breaking words apart and putting them back together again, allows students the ability to fully understand and implement the alphabetic principle. An understanding of the alphabetic principle contributes to the prediction of words through context, as well as making connections to text, and being able to check their pronunciations of words orally (Villaume & Brabham, 2003; National Reading Panel, 2000). Villaume and Brabham (2003) stated that the “command of the alphabetic principle is the foundation for accurate word recognition and a prerequisite for fluency…these attributes are critical because they enable readers to invest their energies in the real business of reading comprehension” (p.478). In order for a thorough understanding of the alphabetic principle to occur, students must have the time to practice, develop and manipulate phonemes and words through strategies taught by the teacher. Therefore, it is essential that teachers have a solid foundation of how to teach phonics systematically. Some strategies of instruction discussed by Villaume and Brabhum (2003) included:

- teacher explanations, isolation of sounds in words, blending of sounds into words, and supervised practice in reading and spelling words… embedded instruction that include
coaching the application of word attack strategies in authentic reading and writing events as well as guiding the discovery of unfamiliar or unusual letter-sound correspondences...provides multiple and varied opportunities for students to develop clear understandings of the alphabetic principle, fosters an active learning stance, promotes self-regulating behaviors, and engenders a fascination for uncovering phonics patterns. (p.480)

By providing these opportunities within the classroom, teachers are supporting students acquiring the knowledge and skill base necessary with phonics in early literacy classrooms.

According to Chall’s (1967) Stages of Reading Development (as cited in Ehri & Flugman, 2018), students acquire this knowledge predominantly in kindergarten and grade one. Once this acquisition takes place, students begin to focus more on fluency, since their memory base has grown to retain high frequency words which allows for more reading and comprehension of harder text. Therefore, phonics instruction has the biggest influence on reading growth within the realm of kindergarten and grade one. For students who do not attain the alphabetic principle prior to the end of grade one, explicit phonics instruction can still have a positive impact on catching up at-risk readers in subsequent grades (National Reading Panel, 2000; Ehri & Flugman, 2018). In fact, research suggests that by teaching phonics systematically, students have a higher capacity of automatically recalling of sight words that result in better reading and spelling skill sets (Wilson & Colmar, 2008; Johnston & Watson, 2004). To further support systematic phonics instruction, Torgerson et al., (2006) noted that it had “significant positive effect on reading accuracy” (p.8). As with phonemic awareness however, systematic phonics instruction is not effective when taught in isolation. By scaffolding PA and phonics into a Reading Framework (including other key elements of reading such as: fluency, comprehension,
and vocabulary), systematic phonics produces substantial reading growth amongst all students (Torgerson et al., 2006; Ehri et al., 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000).

**Oral Language.** The National Early Literacy Panel (2008) defines oral language as “the ability to produce or comprehend spoken language, including vocabulary and grammar” (viii). It is something that is acquired long before students come to school and is (hopefully) encouraged and developed from infancy. As a child enters into kindergarten, their oral language can bridge their transition from oral to written language (Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Doyle, 2013; Hill, 2008). Doyle (2013) states that “proficient readers use[d] their knowledge of oral language from the beginning. Their oral language provide[d]s a reliable source of information for predicting messages and for detecting reading errors” (p.644). Students use their oral language, learned prior to kindergarten, to make sense of the written language. Given the diverse ranges in exposure to language with their families prior to school age, teachers are in an important position to include oral language as a focal point embedded throughout their reading program in the classroom. Many students do not come into kindergarten with enough exposure and have difficulty learning how to read. There have been studies to show that there is a direct correlation to poorer comprehension skills in the subsequent grades (NELP, 2008). Hill (2010) argues that oral language must be explored from “linguistic, social interactionist and developmental psychology viewpoints…it is fundamental to learning and thinking, has many different functions and is comprised of many elements” (p.6). In order to understand the complexity of oral language, Clay (2004) writes:

Readers who are constructing and composing have to be able to switch from the sentence they expected to the new language introduced by the author. Readers use what they know about the world, together with what they already know about the language, in order to
select what might be the next word in a sentence. They often encounter usage they have not heard or seen before, such as a new way of putting things together, a slightly different meaning, a new reference, or a phonemic distinction they had not noticed. Discovering how to vary language, how to rearrange the bits, how to capture a new phrase and use it to the point of tedium are all part of language learning from the preschool years throughout life. (p.7)

In order to help students develop oral language skills, there are many cognitive strategies that can be used in the classroom. Inferring, monitoring, questioning, and visualizing are some exemplars. Through explicit teaching in either whole group, small group, or individual setting, teachers can model out-loud these thinking strategies to students. Weitzmann & Greenberg (2010) discussed repeated readings of a text to help promote language skills. During the first reading of a text, the teacher reads through the entire story while having short conversations in an attempt to provide an overall understanding. For a second reading, have the students retell the story. Teachers could ask students inferring questions and experience more meaningful discussions. A third reading gives the opportunity for a higher-level thinking. McCarrier (1995) found that students “internalized the story structure and language patterns of books, reflected on links between the story being read and others they had heard, and made links between the storybooks and their own experiences” (p.19). Strategies such as this one can be adapted and modified to fit kindergarten to grade 3 and higher.

**Concepts of print.** One of the many first reading assessments kindergarten teachers do with students, is to check for concepts of print (CAP). The NELP (2008) defined concept of print as the “Knowledge of print conventions (e.g., left–right, front–back) and concepts (book cover, author, text). Assessed with either measure developed by investigator or using measure, such as
clay’s concepts about print test” (p.42). Many students will enter into kindergarten with no awareness of CAP. In fact, the NELP highlighted that CAP was one of 10 variables that can be a predictor of literacy growth in later years. Reutzel (2015) acknowledged that this is the reality facing teachers in early literacy. It is a concept that must be taught in the classroom and can be addressed easily in reading assessment and instruction.

Shared reading is a strategy that can be used to strengthen concepts of print (NELP, 2008; Reutzel, 2015). It is highly successful and easily embedded into reading lessons done as a whole group during story time. Reutzel (2015) emphasized using this strategy by using any picture book: the teacher uses “unfamiliar CAP terminology and at the same time [students] see the teacher pointing, framing, highlighting, matching, and so on as she referred to the print features verbally” (p.19). After a whole group lesson, those students who may need repeated work with shared readings to understand CAP, can continue being supported by their teacher while rereading the same picture book during small group time. Even in early literacy grade levels, elements of reading can be interwoven together to strengthen a student’s literacy foundation. In a meta-analysis, the NELP (2008) found that:

“interventions on the early literacy skills of young children indicated that these interventions yielded moderate effects on oral language skills and print knowledge. For oral language skills, these effects were robust across variations in the type of shared-reading intervention and the children’s ages or their risk status” (p.162).

**Fluency.** Open any research article on what fluency is and you will find there are many subtle differences amongst authors’ in their definition. Some, like Nichols, Rupley, and Rasinski (2008) feel that fluency involves three components that include reading accurately, reading with automaticity and oral expression. While others feel Fluency constitutes only two components
such as word recognition and expression (Rasinski 2014). In addition to the discussion of whether or not fluency is comprised of two or three components are also things such as the rate of speed a reader reads (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). To further complicate the issue, Allington (2006) discussed that “fluency, reading in phrases with appropriate intonation and prosody, seems an important characteristic of effective reading. Word-reading efficiency also seems an important, but different, characteristic of effective reading” (p.95). In this project, fluency was interpreted as having two components: as in order to have automaticity, a reader must be able to read accurately which allows for meaning to take place and prosody to develop.

So what does it look like to have automaticity when reading? LaBerge and Samuels (1974) stated that “criterion for deciding when a skill or subskill is automatic is that it can complete its processing while attention is directed elsewhere” (p.295). If a reader is able to identify a word and read it without decoding while simultaneously working on the comprehension or meaning of it, automaticity has been developed. The National Reading Panel (2000) reported automaticity as “the processing of complex information that ordinarily requires long periods of training before the behavior can be executed with little effort or attention” (Ch.3-7). It is the point in which readers have transitioned between their instructional level text to an independent and automated one. Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, and Jenkins (2001) noted that:

For good readers, rapid word recognition short-circuits the conscious-attention mechanism; the automatic spreading-activation component of contextual processing dominates. By contrast, for poor readers, contextual facilitation results from the combined effect of the conscious-attention and the automatic-activation mechanisms.

(p.242)
Some readers, however, can present automaticity but in actuality they are switching between automaticity and comprehension. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) found that some readers may look like they are focusing on two things simultaneously but in reality are just shifting their finite cognitive abilities between the two. In order to have developed full automaticity in reading, the brain has to do two things simultaneously: read the words and comprehend what is being read. If the emphasis is on reading (decoding) the words, the brain exerts very little effort on comprehension of the text. The opposite is true if the reader has automaticity reading the words, then the brain can focus entirely on the comprehension aspect (Rasinski 2014). Once automaticity is developed a reader can begin to experiment with prosodic elements to delve deep into comprehension of the text.

Prosody includes things such as phrasing, volume, pitch, and rhythm. Many times, it is an overarching term used in Fine Art Studies such as music or poetry. Schwanenflugel, Hamilton, Kuhn, Wisenbaker, and Stahl (2004) defined prosody as the: “oral reading sounds much like speech with appropriate phrasing, pause structures, stress, rise and fall patterns, and general expressiveness” (p.119). Many other authors go on to state similar definitions when discussing what prosody means and refer to the term expressiveness. Fries (1963) felt that “oral reading ‘with expression’ consists, not only of avoiding a "monotone" in pronunciation ...but also lie in the appropriate intonation and stress patterns for word groups marked by pitch pauses” (p.207). Prosody is like a puzzle comprised of many different elemental pieces that fit together to promote expressive oral reading. Schreiber (1980) stated that teachers will often tell readers to read with expression without any further explanation or explicit teaching on what expression means or how to achieve it. Readers need to be explicitly taught how to read with expression using the various elements as strategies. Cowie, Douglas-Cowie, and Wichmann (2002) wrote
that “writers appear to assume that the distinction is an intuitive one, and the terms are at most
glossed, or operationalized by stipulating that a certain measure will be presumed to capture all
that matters about the meaning of one or the other” (p.48). Prosody has to be broken down and
explained in a way that readers understand what it means and to support their comprehension of
the text. As Rasinski (2014) said when readers read with automaticity and “when reading orally
with appropriate expression the reader is enhancing his or her own comprehension by using
various prosodic elements (volume, pitch, phrasing etc.) to expand on the meaning” (pg.4).

Imagine reading a book with little or no expression, in a monotone tone and stating each
word as a singular identity. Even for an avid and advanced reader, the rate of speed would be
slower than conversation and your brain would have a hard time understanding or taking
meaning from the book. Not only that but it would be terribly boring with little to no enjoyment.
As Rasinski (2014) pointed out, readers may read words correctly but at a very slow and
stretched pace. Often times it includes pauses or breaks while reading to decipher and self-
correct words while reading with little to no expression. Learning new information can be a
daunting task to most students let alone struggling to understand the written instructions. Moats
(2001) highlighted that readers who struggle, especially older readers, do not want to read as it is
taxing and not an engaging task, which leads to a cyclical downwards spiral of failure to thrive as
a reader. In essence, without Fluency strategies, students are left with frustration and resentment.
Allington (1983) hypothesized that “successful readers are more often reading material that is
relatively easy for them, thereby facilitating the transition to fluent reading” (p.558). Once
automaticity and prosody are both present, a reader can then read effortlessly and utilize all their
cognitive ability towards the comprehension of text. It would make sense that readers develop
fluency as a natural progression after learning decoding skills and prior to comprehension. A
number of studies have shown that instruction with oral fluency strategies help readers move from decoding to phrasing to reading comprehension skills (Allington, 1983; Paige, Rasinski & Magpuri-Lavell, 2012). Briggs and Forbes (2002) summarized that:

When children’s reading is phrased and fluent, meaning and structural information are available to be integrated with visual information. At the same time, text read in a phrased and fluent manner is an indication that all sources of information are being used in a balanced, efficient way for the purpose of gaining meaning. When we teach for phrased and fluent reading, we are calling a child to draw from all sources of information to acquire meaning from text (p.5)

In essence, Fluency helps take a reader from decoding to comprehension and beyond.

When readers struggle with the ability to decode words, all of their focus is redirected to just that task. The brain cannot multitask simultaneously, with the same amount of cognitive ability, to both decoding and comprehension of text. In fact, struggling readers will often go between trying to identify a word, and deciphering the meaning as two separate tasks (Hudson et al., 2005). With Fluency, new knowledge or strategies in reading are not the primary goal at this point. The repeated practice builds success for the reader to shift their focus from compartmentalizing reading to understanding meaning. It is a stage where readers do not acquire new information but begin to have control over their reading and where comprehension begins to come into focus (Nichols et al., 2008). This development of fluency needs to happen between the shift of learning to read and reading to learn. When focused on fluency, Worthy and Broaddus (2001) stated that “the ease, speed, and understanding gained during meaningful, guided oral fluency instruction and practice helps to develop students’ ability to read silently for meaning, a major aim of reading instruction” (pg.340). Moreover, Briggs and Forbes (2002) suggested that
teachers need to consider any challenges within a text, so that a student is reading at an independent level which will allow for fluency practice. These challenges may include layout, language structures, familiarity of topics, story structure” (p.7).

By developing fluency, students are motivated to become passionate and enthusiastic readers who understand the text better. The classroom dynamics change to more of an atmosphere of wanting to read in their own time (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). A cyclical pattern begins to emerge where readers are engaged in text while comprehending what they are reading. This motivates students to read more, which leads to more engagement and deeper comprehension skills. This shift will help to propel readers forward at a much faster pace to become independent readers (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Hudson et al., (2005) stated: “Comprehension requires higher order processes that cannot become automatic, word identification must become the automatic process. The only other option…is to switch attention rapidly back and forth from identifying words on the page to constructing meaning” (p.703). By utilizing best practice strategies, appropriate levelled texts and independent choice, fluency will help propel students into transitioning the gap between learning to read and reading to learn.

With several reading elements in place, students can devote more of their attention towards Comprehension while reading, as instruction of PA, phonics and fluency alone isn’t enough (Stahl, 2004).

**Comprehension.** The National Reading Panel (2000) wrote that comprehension is one of the most important parts of a child’s reading development. The NRP goes on to state that a reader must be able to understand what they are reading so that they can apply their understanding towards making connections. Since there are so many ways to read, such as finding information
for learning or for enjoyment, students must be able to extract that information from language and/or print. This allows the student to:

make meanings of the text, to form memory representations of these meanings, and to use them to communicate information with others about what was read…in the intentional, problem-solving, thinking processes of the reader that occur during an interchange with a text. (NRP, 2000, 4-5)

Pardo (2004) concluded that it is this interaction of text (with prior knowledge, experiences, and the viewpoint of the reader) that provides us with a definition of comprehension. For comprehension to occur, knowledge must be organized into sections that allow students to efficiently access it at a later date. Any new information acquired allows a student to access their previous knowledge base (pulling long-term knowledge temporarily into short term memory), link it to the new text and create a connection for meaning. This type of storage is called schema theory (Pardo, 2004). Referring back to the importance of reading elements, if the brain is largely pre-occupied with any one of these, emphasis using its finite resources for any comprehension connections or retrieval would be very limited. The process of acquiring comprehension skills, therefore, must be done strategically and with a lot of practice. Harvey and Goudvis (2013) found that effective comprehension instruction occurs when combined across all areas of curriculum, and not just confined to strategies taught during reading.

Comprehension strategies are specific instructional procedures that are taught to students by teachers to help with their awareness of how well they are comprehending what they are reading. Many researchers concur (National Reading Panel, 2000; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Stahl, 2004; McLaughlin, 2012) that by teaching students how to use these strategies, students will become independent in their ability to understand if they are comprehending successfully. A
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highly effective teaching instructional model to support learning comprehension strategies is called The Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). This model uses multiple steps to gradually release responsibility from the teacher to the student. McLaughlin (2012) discussed the steps as follows:

When using explicit instruction, teachers introduce the text and encourage students to activate their prior knowledge, make connections, and set purposes for reading. Explicit instruction involves directly teaching students, often through a multiple step process that promotes scaffolding. Typically, there is a great deal of teacher support in the earlier steps, followed by a gradual release of responsibility to the students in the later steps.

(p.435)

By using this model, students can access their schema and create connections with new information being read. Stahl (2004) concluded that the key to a student’s acquisition of comprehension strategies is by using models such as the Gradual Release of Responsibility. The type of strategies that teachers choose to teach students, also has a dramatic impact on a student’s comprehension level. Previewing, self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, vocabulary, monitoring, summarizing, and evaluating are all strategies that need to be explicitly taught for meaningful comprehension to occur (McLaughlin, 2012; Stahl, 2004; Pardo, 2004). Specifically for early literacy classrooms, Stahl (2004) categorized these as the most effective strategies. Researchers also hold other strategies, such as summarization, that holds a lot of evidence based research on having a positive impact for a student’s comprehension gains, but are not high on the top of the list for early literacy instruction. It is crucial that early literacy teachers be well versed in which comprehension strategies should be explicitly taught in kindergarten to grade three, and which ones will have the same impact. With this understanding, teachers can teach the
importance of comprehension; to acquire, activate, and monitor comprehension of messages in reading (Pardo, 2004; Harvey & Goudvis, 2013; Connor et al., 2014). “Teachers provide explicit instruction of useful comprehension strategies, teach students to monitor and repair, use multiple strategy approaches, scaffold support, and make reading and writing connections visible to students” (Pardo, 2004, p.277). With explicit instruction of strategies, and the gradual release of responsibility model, teachers learn what their students’ progress, abilities, and struggles are, which can then be used in order to differentiate instruction for their learners (McLaughlin, 2012).

When reading, students, adults, and even researchers will sometimes read entire passages of text yet not retain any information from what they have read. Harvey and Goudvis (2013) found that we can sometimes scan lines of text and answer basic questions (in relation to the pages read), yet not be able to summarize the main objective or idea. It is important that students are taught how to monitor and focus their understanding of the text in front of them; that they can recall specific strategies that can be used to help them connect to the text at a higher level of thinking then the literal form. Not all strategies taught can be applied to every comprehension question. Students still need to sift through the strategies, find the one that applies, and use it to ask deeper questions, connect to knowledge and make decisions based on their new found comprehension (Harvey & Goudvis, 2013). This not only empowers students but can be highly motivational in continuing to pursue more knowledge through even more reading. Pardo (2004) found that motivated students will work harder at applying strategies and build meaning, while those who are less motivated didn’t work as hard. Pearson, and Gallagher (1983) indicated that better readers engage their background knowledge, have better vocabulary, draw inferences, summarize, use text features better, and monitor the use of strategies better. If at-risk students
only practice using what they know, not only do they not get better, they may ingrain those poor
strategies even further.

The National Reading Panel (2000), found three themes that arose from their findings
when it comes to reading comprehension:

(1) reading comprehension is a cognitive process that integrates complex skills and
cannot be understood without examining the critical role of vocabulary learning and
instruction and its development; (2) active interactive strategic processes are critically
necessary to the development of reading comprehension; and (3) the preparation of
teachers to best equip them to facilitate these complex processes is critical and intimately
tied to the development of reading comprehension (4-1).

Comprehension is an essential, if not the most important, element to reading and imperative for
students to master to become better readers. Comprehension also goes hand in hand with
learning new vocabulary (National Reading Panel, 2000; Pardo, 2004). As Blachowicz, Fisher,
Ogle, and Watts-Taffe (2006) pointed out, you will comprehend what you are reading better if
you understand the words!

**Vocabulary.** Biemiller and Boote (2006) defined vocabulary as “knowledge of word
meanings” (p.44). Its importance and role, in contributing as a predictor of comprehension and
fluency, has been celebrated by many researchers (Bromley, 2007; Biemiller & Boote, 2006;
Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008; National Reading Panel, 2000). Hemphill and Tivnan (2008) went on
to state that at the beginning of first grade, letter-word identification was the stronger predictor,
but by the end of grades two and three, vocabulary was the dominating factor. As discussed
previously with phonemic awareness, the impact of those early skillsets lessen over time and are
replaced with vocabulary instruction alongside comprehension and fluency. When a student first
starts to read, unfamiliar words are first decoded and then usually said out loud using their oral vocabulary, which should make the new word easier to understand. However, if the word is not a familiar word to the student when they say it out-loud, then comprehension of what was just read will not occur (National Reading Panel; Berne & Blachowicz, 2008; Camille et al., 2006; Bromley, 2007). For example, if a student comes across the new word “apple” and orally pronounces it with a long ‘A’ vowel instead of a short ‘A’ vowel, comprehension and inferencing would be difficult. If the student already has an oral vocabulary that includes hearing and understanding the word “apple,” but say it with the long “A” sound, they can manipulate the word orally by saying the word again with a short ‘A’ vowel sound and comprehend the word. All of a sudden the student makes a connection, and the word “apple” in text (decoded with the proper oral vocabulary) is comprehended as a piece of fruit. Camille et al., (2006) provided the insight that the instruction of vocabulary in the past has not always been a focal point on its own. Most instruction predominantly focused on word recognition (decoding) and comprehension. Vocabulary was taught as lists of words void of any connections. Instead, it should be viewed as an important element in its own right, with teachers having “a strong understanding of the underpinnings of vocabulary development, an array of strategies for teaching individual words and for teaching word-learning strategies for independence” (Camille et al., 2006, p.534).

When looking at strategic ways to teach students new vocabulary, teachers must move away from the use of randomized lists of words, with the exception of early literacy where emphasis is placed on high frequency sight words but are still chosen explicitly (Bromley, 2007; Camille et al., 2006; Nelson, Dole, Hosp & Hosp, 2015). The randomized words do not promote a higher achievement in comprehension. Students need time to understand new vocabulary: to “analyze word structure, understand multiple meanings and use words actively in authentic
ways…that empower them for lifelong learning” (Bromley, 2007, p.536). The National Reading Panel (2000) found that vocabulary should to be taught both explicitly and through authentic learning moments while reading. Specifically, the learning should have students directly involved in the process. As noted previously in fluency instruction, students will also not be able to fully comprehend what they are reading if they focus their finite resources of the brain to mentally decode new words. Pardo (2004) stated that students must also be taught important vocabulary prior to reading unfamiliar texts in order to help elicit more comprehension. This also provides students with the powerful strategy of connecting new text with information they already know. In order to do this effectively with the greatest impact on students learning, teachers must consider a student’s background knowledge and select a few key words to highlight as new vocabulary (Pardo, 2004; McLaughlin, 2012; Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). By utilizing opportunities of word consciousness, it gives a teacher an authentic way to teach vocabulary while introducing students to recognize and appreciate new words within their readings (Camille, et al., 2006; Nelson et al., 2015; National Reading Panel, 2000). In fact, when conducting research, Nelson et al., (2015) discovered that word consciousness vocabulary instruction was only used 1.6% of the time. Effective approaches in teaching vocabulary should be taught explicitly (using real world application across all academic areas with intention throughout the day) by scaffolding and making connections, while being differentiated for students by having multiple opportunities for practice (National Reading Panel, 2000; Camille et al., 2006).

It must also be noted that students are also coming into the school system in kindergarten with a varying degree of vocabulary. Biemiller (2005) mentioned this in his research that showed by the end of grade two, at-risk students had achieved 4,000 root word meanings, excelling
students had achieved 8,000 and average students had 6,000. The gap of 2,000 root word meanings equates to approximately two grade levels. This gap was found to remain consistent throughout their schooling, even with additional supports (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008; Camille et al., 2006). These findings highlight the importance of vocabulary instruction in the classroom, yet over the span of three years, Nelson et al., (2015) found that early literacy teachers “provided an average 7.55 minutes of vocabulary instruction during their 178 minute language blocks…an average of 4.24% total time” (p.162). They also noted that only 60% of teachers imbedded instructional vocabulary time in their classroom. It is imperative that vocabulary instruction start in the early years of literacy learning so that the gap doesn’t continue to get wider. Research has concluded that vocabulary instruction must be its own focal point as a key element in the instruction of reading (Camille, et al. 2006; National Reading Panel; McLaughlin, 2012; Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Bromley, 2007; Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008; Nelson et al., 2015; Duke & Block, 2012).

**Reciprocity.** Reciprocity is the close relationship built upon and directly tied to something else. In reading, there is reciprocity between reading and writing: students take what they know in reading and apply it to what they know about in writing. The reverse is also true in that students take their learning in writing and apply it to their reading (Fried, 2006). In essence, one can’t exist without the other, and is another important aspect that needs to be stated. Allyn (2018) stated it best: “Reading is like breathing in; writing is like breathing out” (p.1). If we tie all of the important elements of reading together in a package alongside writing, students will have high success as life-long literacy learners. Doyle (2013) summarized the interconnectedness between the reading and writing:
literacy processing behaviors of young learners engaged in reading and writing continuous text change over time. Beginning, novice readers/writers apply low-level strategies in their earliest attempts to read and write as they approach literacy tasks with vague, rudimentary understandings. They gain proficiency as a result of opportunities to engage in reading and writing continuous texts with supportive instruction. They acquire more knowledge to support their processing, and over time their behaviors indicate acquisition of a more efficient and effective inner processing system, a complex network of working systems for processing text. (p.646)

In an ever-evolving educational system, especially in one that includes a new provincial curriculum, such as in B.C., the elements that have been discussed remain the pillars of a K-3 reading program in the classroom.

**Within the British Columbia Context: The New Curriculum**

In British Columbia (BC), a new curriculum was developed and implemented in 2015. The Ministry of Education began the process in 2010 and in 2013, revisions were made by teachers selected “by the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF), the Federation of Independent School Associations BC (FISA), and the First Nations Schools Association” (BCTF, 2017). Implementation of the new curriculum was optional in 2015 but finalized with full implementation in September 2016. The rationale for change to the current model was based on an earlier model that required a very gradual change in response to the industrial revolution of societal living (BC Ministry of Education, 2018a). In the 21st century, the world that we live in is changing rapidly where learning from textbooks and teacher direct instruction are no longer at the top of the instructional hierarchy. Simply put, students have information at their technological fingers tips which changes so fast and readily, teachers need to be prepared to
navigate and guide students within their classrooms, instead of the driven, top down nature of traditional instruction. Out of this need, the new curriculum was developed to provide opportunity to focus on the process rather than the content knowledge. The BC curriculum “better engages students in their own learning and fosters the skills and competencies students will need to succeed…that enables and supports increasingly personalized learning, through quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, and high standards” (BC Ministry of Education, 2018a). An equal emphasis is also placed on Core Competencies which focus on communicating, critical thinking, social and emotional understanding (Rushton & Webb, 2016). Through systematic personalized learning, students will be better equipped to meet their own unique styles of learning. Within the realm of Language Arts education, the curriculum model is “less prescriptive and more flexible, students have more opportunities to pursue their interests, aspirations, and passions and to benefit from more specialized areas of language arts study” (BC Ministry of education, 2018b).

The Curriculum Model. BC’s curriculum model focuses on three main components: the Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies, and Content. This methodology utilizes the “know-do-understand” model (see Figure 2 below) to support a concept-based, competency-driven approach where the Content (know), Curricular Competencies (Do), and Big Ideas (Understand) all work together to support deeper learning” (BC Ministry of education, 2018a). The Big Ideas comprise the overarching concepts and principals. The Curricular Competencies are the processes, strategies, and skillsets learned while the content outlines the specific knowledge-based learning required at a particular grade level (BC Ministry of education, 2018a). It was shaped to bring together both current theory and best practices, alongside advice provided by BC teachers that wanted:
Flexibility to better enable teachers to innovate, focus on higher-order learning, address Core Competencies, integrate Aboriginal world views and knowledge and respect the unique nature of disciplines while supporting cross-curricular learning. (BC Ministry of education, 2018c, p.2)

Teachers intertwine Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies, and content together to meet individualized needs as well as to maximize the learning of their students’ in their classrooms. When it comes to the earlier years of education (k-3), the English Language curriculum objective is for students to recognize the importance that everyone can be a “reader and a writer” (BC Ministry of education, 2018b). By implementing this new curriculum, students are “actively involved in a process of meaning and knowledge construction, as opposed to passively receiving information. Students are the makers of meaning and knowledge” (BC Ministry of education, 2018a).
Implementing into practice. The actual implementation of the three main components into practice within a classroom can be done interchangeably. The cyclical nature of British Columbia’s Curriculum Model allows teachers the flexibility to tailor the curriculum in a way that best supports the learners in the classroom at any given time. The teacher, alongside the students, could recognize a Big Idea they want to explore combining it with curricular competencies and content that would help support their understanding of the Big Idea. An alternative may be to start with the Content and Curricular Competencies, with the desired outcome culminating towards a Big Idea (BC Ministry of Education, 2018d).

There are many possible ways to explore the curriculum to achieve the desired outcome. For example, a new teacher starting to teach grade one, may look at the curriculum to prepare how best to teach reading, choosing what Content, Core Curriculum and Big Idea they want to apply. Looking at the grade one curriculum guidelines, a teacher could ascertain that one of the Curricular Competencies necessary to teach is to read fluently at grade level. In order to achieve that Competency, the Content taught may include: concepts of print, print awareness, phonemic and phonological awareness. The overarching Big Idea could be “Playing with language helps us discover how language works” (BC Ministry of Education, 2018e). The Curriculum provides a very broad, open-ended approach to learning that can be individualized to meet the needs of all learners from a variety of angles. Although the new curriculum supports the education of our twenty-first century learners, the open-endedness is also increasing the already overwhelming need to support teachers with these changes.

In the “2017 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey,” teachers reported that they were experiencing “burnout,” and are “exhausted physically, mentally, and financially” (BCTF, 2017). This survey was completed by teachers with varying levels of experience and did
not just encompass new teachers. In other responses (indicated solely by new teachers), it was felt that they were in a state of flux as they graduated within the old curriculum and are currently a teacher teaching on call (TTOC) with the expectation of implementing the new curriculum (BCTF, 2017). Rushton, and Webb (2016) acknowledged this in their findings of applying the inquiry process with student teachers at the University of British Columbia, in a response to the new curriculum:

The process is neither linear nor simple. Many of the teacher candidates have successfully navigated a fairly traditional educational system and have been successful in approaches to learning that value the “right” answer as opposed to problem-solving and diverse paths to knowledge. In inquiry learning, teacher candidates are invited to explore through inquiry, to problematize issues, and to problem-solve as opposed to receiving a prescribed set of skills or one right way to approach teaching. (P.1181)

To go even further, those who are currently teaching have been brought up in an education system designed for the more traditional, industrial revolution society. Not only are teachers facing the traditional struggles and stressors of current teaching generations, but are also now being subjected to mold their own life experiences into an entirely different style of teaching. With such substantial change, and minimal support given, teachers are responding to juggling their responsibilities while learning through their own professional development (Pro-D). Yet, even with the added learning done through Pro-D, teachers have felt there has been little impact on being prepared to implement the new curriculum (BCTF, 2017). Moreover, according to the US Department of Education (2001), the understanding of successful reading development “is paramount for a teacher to be able to follow the progress of young children as they move toward the level of literacy expected in third grade by policy makers” (p.13). Experienced teachers are
feeling the pressure, while new teachers are caught between the old and new curriculum with their own experiences tied to the latter. The pressure felt by new teachers, teaching the essential early years of literacy in kindergarten to grade three, indicates just how imperative supportive change needs to be implemented.

**New K-3 Teachers**

As mentioned in chapter one, for the purpose of this project, a new teacher is defined as one that is within the first five years of their career, is new to the profession, is a teacher teaching on call, or has had a significant change or new classroom assignment. These teachers are certified and qualified by the standards placed on them at the time of their graduation of studies. By all definitions, they are teachers ready to walk into a classroom and start teaching any grade level. But specifically what about teaching reading from kindergarten to Grade three? For example, in 2001 the International Reading Association (IRA) Commission’s survey of preservice preparation in reading surveyed over 900 reading teachers from across the United States. The report stated that specializations in the area of reading were available in over 40% of teacher preservice programs, with both field and practicum studies taking place prior to graduation. Professors teaching the programs were also noted to have a background in teaching reading. It was indicated that over 85% of responses felt the program was above average to excellent (Hoffman et al., 2005). Other reports on different preservice teacher programs suggested otherwise. In 1962 a significant study was done by Austin and Morrison called “The Torch Lighters.” It was the first documented case study exploring new teacher’s preparedness in the area of teaching reading. Austin and Morrison (1962) found that the majority of undergraduate programs were lacking when it came to preparing teachers to teach reading both in content and method areas (Hoffman et al., 2005). In a study done by Mather et al., (2011),
both new teachers and experienced teachers lacked enough knowledge necessary to effectively instruct students how to read, with only 50% of new teachers and 68% of experienced teachers having the requirements necessary. In 2006 a report by the National Council on Teacher Quality reported similar findings that new teachers are not being taught the skillset or knowledge base needed to effectively teach reading (Malatesha et al., 2009). Moreover, Snow and Griffin (1998) found that programs often failed in achieving their objectives due to lack of strong mentorship and the choppy disjointedness of one course to the next. This lack of continuity and change has resulted in new teachers struggling when it comes to teaching reading.

**Expectations and Struggles.** Duncan (2011), stated that “more than three in five education school alumni report that their education school did not prepare them for classroom realities” (p.5). That means 60% of all new teachers are not feeling prepared to teach or to meet expectations placed on them once in the classroom. Practicums and field experiences, in comparison to the amount of textbook coursework done, do not provide enough time immersed in schools to allow new teachers the time necessary in order to cope in real-life classroom scenarios. There is no continuity, even within the same University, in terms of how many practicums or credits a student needs in order to graduate as a teacher. Levine (2006) highlighted that “teaching is different…students can earn a whole host of degrees and certificates…a preparation program may be one year or two, four years or even five.” (p.36). Other professions in the public sector require multiple levels of training in a gradual release of responsibility model before they become fully certified with requirements specific to the end of each level. A doctor must finish their coursework and be immersed in multiple practicums, plus finish a residency before graduating. At the beginning of what could be a wonderful teacher residency (if teacher training was modeled to reflect other public sectors such as Doctors), new teachers are instead
assigned to teach in an empty classroom, void of any materials, labeled with a grade level and
left alone to teach.

It is at this critical juncture that new teachers need the most support. Valencia, Place,
Martin, and Grossman (2006) felt that “at the induction stage, teachers need support for learning
about and from materials…new teachers do not have the time, confidence, or expertise to be able
to sort through complex, comprehensive programs or to use supplemental materials effectively”
(p.117). Moreover, how can they be expected to teach something they may or may not even
know is an important concept to teach? How do they teach something that doesn’t exist from
their viewpoint? New teachers who are facing the task of teaching reading can’t be effective with
the little training in their reading coursework, especially isolated within their own classroom
(Snow & Griffin, 1998). Moats and Lyon (1996) stated that new teachers have “insufficiently
developed concepts about language and pervasive conceptual weaknesses in the very skills that
are needed for direct, systematic, language-focused reading instruction, such as the ability to
count phonemes and to identify phonic relationships” (p.79). Moreover, (Malatesha et al., 2009)
found that 53% of preservice teachers and 60% of teachers could only answer half the questions
on a survey, when asked about their understanding of “language structure”. Those who had
taught longer than 11 years had a greater knowledge base than a new teacher’s experience, but
overall the scores showed a knowledge base of roughly one-third, no matter the number of years
of experience as a teacher. In fact, Duke and Block (2012) suggested that there are three distinct
obstacles facing teachers when teaching reading. The first obstacle is the basic skill of learning to
read. The second is the more advanced skills such as comprehension and conceptual knowledge.
The third obstacle is the finite amount of time teachers have to instruct reading on a daily basis in
the classroom. There seems to be no fluidity between the knowledge base and experience of
preservice teachers in becoming expert teachers in the field, yet expectations to achieve successful readers in the classroom is high.

**Inclusive Classrooms.** New teachers who are faced with teaching reading are also in the new era of inclusive education for all learners within the classroom. This means that students, no matter how diverse their learning needs, are taught to read in the classroom with varying levels of success and support. Students with learning disabilities are learning to read alongside their peers, but their individual requirements to be successful differ greatly and any services allocated to them are generally not received until after the second grade, after they have failed at reading (Mather et al., 2001). New teachers must be able to implement strategies that will help all their diverse learners in their classroom. This thinking has been supported by many top literary scholars who have questioned the need for special teachers to teach the lowest literacy readers in a classroom. Allington (2013) discussed the notion that there needs to be change within the education system. Even though there is no one way to help readers achieve literary success in reading, educating all teachers to work with these students within the classroom helps promote a less fragmented approach to learning how to read. In essence, the pull-out method of students leaving the classroom to learn (at a Tier 1 or Tier 2 setting) has been shown to not be more advantageous (Gelzheiser, Meyers, & Pruzek, 1992; Allington, 2013; Allington & Cunningham, 1996) and is causing more harm than good. For students who are needing support at a Tier one and Tier two level of intervention, having push-in services will create better gains. For those students who are still struggling with those additional push-in services and require Tier three intervention, pull-out services are required. If classroom teachers are equipped for differentiated instruction at a Tier one and Tier two level, alongside other support services offered in the school, the need for Tier three pull-out services are greatly diminished.
Since research has shown teachers do not have the basic knowledge set to teach reading, scholars are advocating for another layer to be added so teachers can not only teach, but differentiate their instruction for all learners. As previously mentioned, this is expected while facing a classroom with little to no resources or programs for a new teacher to utilize. As Herman et al., (2018) stated, teachers are receiving “pressures from administrators, parents, and society at large to increase student outcomes while in many cases receiving fewer resources to do so” (p.97). New teachers are being faced with struggles and expectations that are piling up before them in a never ending “shoveling sand out of a sand pit” effect: the harder they dig, the more they are buried. It is no wonder the dropout rate is so high amongst new teachers (BCTF, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). As new teachers walk into their own classrooms, they are faced with the insurmountable task (both mentally and physically) of being prepared to teach. Valencia et al., (2006) stated:

As new teachers launch their careers, they confront the issues faced by all beginning teachers – classroom management, developing a teacher identity, learning the school culture, understanding students, building a repertoire of instructional strategies, and the like. But in today’s environment, new teachers face the added pressure of high stakes accountability and of policies, both explicit and implicit, aimed at improving their teaching and their students’ learning. (p.113)

Yet it doesn’t even begin to break down where to find things such as instructional strategies, the understanding or reasoning behind the use of those strategies and how to effectively implement them. Gambrell, Morrow and Pressley (2007) narrowed this viewpoint even further within the scope of teaching literacy: teachers must be able to interweave these complexities and shape them to "meet the needs of a particular set of students with a differentiated set of needs…to lead
students to higher levels of literacy achievement and engagement” (p.16). A bi-product of learning how to teach to the diverse needs of a classroom of students can be the added stressor of behavioral management. Often times, new teachers are having to learn what impacts a student’s behavior within the academic instruction. That is to say, if the instruction does not meet the needs of a particular student, then potential increase of behavior incidences can occur. This additional layer of managing student behavior, along with following time restrictions, has shown to be two of the sources linked to predict teacher burn out (Kokkinos, 2007). These first few years for a new teacher can continue to be quite difficult to navigate which can ultimately set them up for how they view their future success in teaching.

**Self-efficacy.** A new teacher’s sense of self-efficacy is often quite low. How they value themselves as a teacher is often connected with the ability to teach their students effectively. Yet as new teachers are on a learning curve themselves, they often struggle with feelings of effectiveness in their capabilities. This lack of effective teaching may result in an inability to successfully teach students things such as how to read. Moreover, it can become a spiral effect of a teacher’s belief that their lack of efficacy will have a direct correlation to their students’ ability to learn, which in turn promotes even more of a feeling of inefficacy (Baştuğ, 2016). New teachers are also faced with expectations and standards met by more experienced teachers around them and that from administration. Baştuğ (2016) discussed that “due to several fears such as not receiving feedback from students, not being able to lead students to read, parents’ expectation and panic, being controlled and evaluated by a group teacher, an inspector or the head master, teachers feel tense and face considerable stress” (p.740). Simply put, other teachers, parents, and administration are asking about student progress while new teachers are already feeling inefficient, ineffective, and overwhelmed with their own learning (BCTF, 2017). These
difficulties, along with the inefficacy felt, contribute to the 50% drop out rate amongst new teachers within the first five years of teaching (Baştuğ 2016; Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012).

**Need for support.** While statistics show that experienced teachers and administrators can have a negative impact on the dropout rate amongst new teachers, they can also have a positive impact. In a study done by Durksen, Klassen, and Daniels (2017), it was found that “early career teachers produced the lowest mean scores for teachers' engagement and self- and collective efficacy. As expected, “collaboration with other teachers” was reported as the most influential type of professional learning on teachers' self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and sources of efficacy” (p.58). With this embedded support, effective teacher collaboration can have a dramatic effect on new teachers. If support and mentorship are in place for new teachers from the beginning, then there is evidence to suggest that the “U-shaped curve,” discussed by Ingersoll (2001), would be less dramatic. Ingersoll noticed a direct relationship between experience and dropout rates. New teachers start at one point, with the dropout rate in the first five years curving downwards. Those teachers still left in the education system after the first five years are less likely to leave the profession, hence the upward swing of the U-shaped curve. With supports in place to help (Valencia et al., 2006), teacher’s would struggle less and the dropout rate would decrease.

New teachers are also coming into the classrooms armed with differing degrees of knowledge based on their prior education. Duke and Block (2012) stated that a secondary obstacle to teaching reading is the very notion that not all skills can be taught through curricular knowledge alone. Support is necessary as Snow and Matthew (2016) discussed that “Curricular support for teachers is a frequently noted feature of good early childhood programs, and a rich
and logically sequenced curriculum is the backbone of well-structured primary literacy instruction” (p.69). Even with practicums of varying length, it is very challenging to suddenly be on your own. One way to view this, is to think of the bridge between teaching reading and comprehension. Students are first taught how to read (decoding) and as they progress, their learning how to read transverses towards reading to learn (comprehension). Nichols et al. (2008) stated that it is a stage where readers do not acquire new information but begin to have control over their reading and where comprehension begins to come into focus. In order to achieve this succession efficiently, students must spend time traversing between learning to read and reading to learn by building fluency. This bridge is an important part of the process. New teachers need this same opportunity of support during their first few years of teaching. Levine (2006) highlighted the importance of creating that link between a new teacher’s education program and the actualities of teaching. With this bridge solidly connected, it would not only improve the quality of teaching but also minimize the percentage of new teacher struggles and ultimately the dropout rate (Levine 2006). In fact, when surveying new teachers and asking what they would purchase if given an unlimited budget, Valencia et al., (2006) noted that new teachers overwhelmingly wanted a good teacher supporting them. New teachers want that mentorship to provide feedback and support.

This call for support can be heard from many new teachers. In fact, this trend can be traced back through many decades. For example, Snow et al. (1998) highlighted the need for better preparation of teachers in both intensity and quality of instruction for best practices in teaching. Teachers need both time and support to watch, learn, grow, embed, reflect, and repeat multiple times as a spiral of inquiry. It would also help with new teacher self-efficacy. In Broaddus and Bloodgood’s (1999) study, they found that “giving teachers focused time and
ongoing professional support while they participated in an early intervention program changed their perceptions of remedial instruction and of the students they were teaching. In turn, these beliefs transferred to classroom practice” (p.446). Malatesha et al. (2009) also discussed the need for ongoing professional collaboration for new teachers as it helps to solidify greater teaching practices and performance. In reviews done by Hoffman et al. (2005), four leading themes arose amongst its reviewers: on going professional development and support for new teachers, refined courses that were more responsive to differentiated learning and more field base learning, and practicum experiences. The fourth theme concluded that teachers can shift their practice but more research is needed on how long those changes are sustained. Essentially, with the shock of being a new teacher, teachers have difficulty in transferring their preservice knowledge into classroom practice. New teachers will also take on the pedagogy of teaching that is already happening within their new school. That is, teach reading in the same style as their next door teacher. With the implementation of these supports, new teachers would have a better chance of maintaining those positive shifts in their practice, before the potential struggles and stressors occur. In research explicit to creating change for teachers supporting struggling readers, Broaddus and Bloodgood (1999) noted that teachers who were given support with a specific model to teach reading were better able to concentrate on individual students. In essence, they had better retention for their own learning while instructing. One teacher indicated that she “learned a lot about specific development in reading and what some of the problems could be and how to deal with this” (Broaddus & Bloodgood, 1999, p.438). Teachers were able to learn new strategies and follow one specific model, slowing down their teaching without having to feel the need to get through all the curriculum. They need mentorship and time to take what they have learned in university and implement it into the classroom, by scaffolding strategies over the
course of a few years. Consistency across the classrooms were also noted. Those involved found retention and familiarity with the model given to them, which helped build up their self-efficacy and interlink the model to include other curriculum areas. As Valencia et al., (2006) found in their study, teachers want the support and the scaffolding that happens alongside learning mentorship. As long as it is done in a gradual release of responsibility so that new teachers could take ownership once they felt they were ready. By incorporating these changes and providing the support needed, new teachers may have less struggles, fewer teachers leaving the profession, and more self-efficacy to change lives within their classroom. In an ever-evolving education system, especially in one that includes a new provincial curriculum, mentorship and a bridging link between university and the first few years of teaching are imperative.

Summary

Careful review of the research suggests that early literacy teachers in kindergarten to grade three have an important job when it comes to setting the foundation for learning how to read. The elements of learning how to read include phonemic awareness, phonics, oral language, concepts of print, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. The research has indicated that new teachers face many expectations and struggles during their first few years of teaching that can ultimately lead to new teachers leaving the profession if proper support is not established or available. This support needs to continue from preservice teachers, to newly established teachers for their first few pivotal years. This is especially evident when you layer on a newly implemented curriculum such as the one in British Columbia that is more inquiry driven.

The next chapter will focus on why Kelly Inglis and I have chosen to design the website Reading Roadmap for new K-3 Teachers, a description of the website, a rationale of the
development and design, considerations for designing an educational website, and a timetable outlining the timeline.
Chapter Three: Project Design

As highlighted in the previous literature review, research findings helped to highlight the significance of early literacy in K-3 classrooms, the important elements necessary in a reading program, the new BC curriculum, and the cumulative impact it all has on new K-3 teachers. Through the guiding question of how can a website be designed to support new K-3 teachers in understanding and developing their own reading program, educational website design was explored. An interesting paper by Karsenti (2010), detailed how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been found to help student teachers “cope with pedagogical and other challenges encountered during their internship in various ways…to take advantage of a vast network in order to maximize their academic performance, and even increase their well-being in the sometimes difficult situations that can occur in schools (p.213). By designing a website, the target audience can be more expansive, inclusive, and brings together a community for new K-3 teachers who teach reading, to learn and grow together.

The target audience for the Reading Roadmap website is for all new K-3 teachers teaching in the Nanaimo Ladysmith Public School District #68 on Vancouver Island, British Columbia Canada. However, the website will be relevant to all teachers teaching reading to students as the evidence based practices discussed can be implemented in classrooms across Canada and beyond. Chapter three will outline the design of our website, A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers. It is our hope that the design of this website will give new K-3 teachers the tools necessary to help negate some of the pressures felt when teaching students how to read.

Description

The website domain was purchased in January 2019. The name, A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers (www.ReadingRoadmap.ca), was developed to make it easy for teachers to
remember and find when searching. The vision for the website was to make it easy to navigate, with a simple but inviting design. Since websites are continuously changing and evolving, the initial launch of the website includes only the descriptors discussed in this chapter (see figure 4 below).

**Figure 4: Home page for A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers**

On the homepage, is a descriptor welcoming users to the website. Above this are some tabs of the elements of reading. Each element is identified by its own color-coded car image to maintain the road theme of the website. Users can click on each tab to learn more about that specific element. One click will take the user to that specific key elements main page where there are 5
tabs to choose from: what, how, assessment, resources, and framework (the format is identical for the remaining elements). The “what” includes simple, point form information for new teachers to get an understanding of what the element is and why it is important. Under the “how” tab, there is specific examples on how to teach that element as well as three main components identified as necessary for instruction. These three components are visually represented by the 3 yellow markers/stripes on the road found underneath the elements car. The “assessment” tab includes formative assessment ideas to help teachers differentiate their instruction and hone in on the explicit instruction needed for whole class, group, or individual learners. The resources tab, shares many research based explicit instruction practices, methods, books etc. that can be used by a teacher. The final tab, “Framework” provides sample lesson plans for each element that can be utilized the same day in a classroom. All of the necessary components and files are ready to be downloaded. Each of the element pages can stand on its own, should a teacher only want information on one area. Underneath the welcome on the homepage, is an explanation of how to navigate the site. Below this is the main Reading Roadmap logo of a black car driving down the connected elements of road. Clicking on this image will take the user directly to “The Framework”.

There is also a menu located at the top that allows users to jump to any area without having to return to the homepage first. Included in this menu, is a section called “Framework”. This section includes a main page called “Build the Framework” (with a practical guide on how to put the elements together to establish their reading program), a balanced literacy page, a build by grade page, grade-specific pages, and a resource page. This reading framework is perhaps one of the most pivotal aspects to the website, as it is often the “what now” or application of all the information that can also be overwhelming to new teachers. From the main “build by grade”
page, the user can then click on a specific grade level from Kindergarten to Grade Three, to see which elements are the most important for that grade level. After spending time on the website, a new K-3 teacher will have an understanding of what are the elements in reading, how to teach them, formative assessment ideas, specific resources to acquire, and building the road (putting it all together) for their grade level (see figure 4 below).

To make it as globally connected as possible, there are also links to connect to the Reading Roadmap Facebook page, and Instagram account where new teachers can come together in their learning journey. To keep it user friendly, the website will also stay within a “3 click maximum,” meaning all the vital information is no more than three clicks away from the home page. This ideation was not constructed from reading literature reviews but from our own perceptions and frustrations throughout the years of navigating websites to find information for our own educational purposes: if it takes us too long to find the information we are looking for there is a good chance we will look elsewhere.
Rationale

Development and design of A Reading Roadmap for New K-3 Teachers. Research surrounding website design was conducted in order to learn what was important for the designing and creation of a website for teachers. Shui Ng (2014), noted that:

the discussion on creating educational websites is inadequate if opinions from teachers are neglected. According to this line of thought, it is important to put teachers’ view into consideration for developing high-quality educational websites. (p.101)

It makes logical sense for Kelly and I, as teachers, to develop a website that we find to be not only high quality but also user-friendly, efficient, and easily implementable within a classroom. This also includes sharing the website with not only new K-3 teachers but also pre-service teachers, to make sure their voices are heard before finalizing our designs. Prior to officially launching the website, we presented it to pre-service teachers at Vancouver Island University as well as at a workshop for teachers in our school District. Both oral and written feedback was collected to help us finalize the website. Combining all of this, as well as the professional experience and research to back up what reading pedagogy should be on the website, the next step was to understand how to design it. As Lindgaard, Fernandes, Dudek and Brown (2006) found in their research, creating “a positive first impression no matter how usable their website is and regardless of the quality of information it may contain” (p.116) was the most important element. Even if a website has all the necessary qualities and information presented to its target audience, if the user has a negative reaction to the design the content no longer matters. Shui Ng (2014) stated the design of a website must be appealing in order for users to continue to navigate the page. Going even further, Lindgaard et al., (2006) summarized their findings that a user’s impression of a website is generated in the first 50ms of viewing: “neurophysiological evidence
supports the contention that emotional responses can indeed occur preattentively, before the organism has had a chance cognitively to analyse or evaluate the incoming stimulus or stimuli (p.116). Research was necessary to find out what considerations needed to be taken into account in order to design the website.

**Considerations.** Through-out all of the research for this project, there was a common theme amongst researchers on what should be considered as important aspects of website design. Aesthetics, purpose, user satisfaction, and usability were cited as the foundational components required in a high-quality educational website design (Lamberz, Litfin, Teckert, & Meeh-Bunse, 2018; Shui Ng, 2014; Lawrence, Tavakol, 2007). Aesthetics is an umbrella term that includes things such as color, multimedia elements, design, and page layout (Shui Ng, 2014). In fact, Shui Ng (2014) goes on to state multimedia elements are key components to any website and the arrangement of those elements has a dramatic effect on the quality of the design. Lawrence and Tavakol (2007) stated that aesthetics sets the tone for the entire website but an overflow of information can kill its aesthetics. There needs to be a balance in the design with just the right amount of information as to not overwhelm the user. Shui Ng (2014), concluded the above considerations within his research with preservice teachers:

- that color was considered as the most important design factor in developing an educational website…that web navigation, graphic, fonts and typography are relatively important…audio was considered as the least important factor in an educational website.

Moreover, the area of TPCK-W ranked second last in the list which reflects that participants considered this area as relatively less important in the design of an educational website. (p.106)
It’s important to note that TPCK-W stands for Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge-Web and is used as an acronym in web designing. With the research and considerations in place, the development and design of the Reading Roadmap website progressed. All elements of the website design were created with the above research and considerations in place. The simplistic theme of a roadmap, the muted primary colors used on the cars, the road itself with 3 individual yellow markers to indicate important components of each key element, the building of the road pieces to create a reading program, the roundabout used to visualize formative assessment as well as the lesson framework, and what key information needed to be included under each tab so as to not overwhelm but also inform the user. Simplistic, efficient, user-friendly, and fun was our main objectives.

**Website Design Timetable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Initial Research</strong></th>
<th>i.e.: Early Literacy: K-3; Elements of Reading; B.C. and the New Curriculum; New K-3 Teachers; Designing an Educational Website.</th>
<th>January – April 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registered Website Domain</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.ReadingRoadmap.ca">www.ReadingRoadmap.ca</a></td>
<td>Feb 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website Creation</strong></td>
<td>– reflection, and revision.</td>
<td>May – September 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website Creation Cont’d.</strong></td>
<td>– Possible feedback on beta version by peers.</td>
<td>Oct 2019 – Dec. 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soft Website launch</strong></td>
<td>– to allow time for website glitches to be addressed.</td>
<td>Dec. 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website launch</strong></td>
<td>– to colleagues and social media.</td>
<td>Jan 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presented/Distributed/shared</strong></td>
<td>– Through District website and email notification, Pro-D presentation and multiple workshops, social media and by word of mouth.</td>
<td>Feb - April 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Four: The Design

Refer to www.readingroadmap.ca for the completed design project. The following screen shots illustrate the content of the forty webpages designed for the website. While there are tabs embedded within many of the pages, the following figures give a visual overview of the project. Many of the images are also linked to downloadable pdf versions. The illustrations will be shown in the order they are listed on the website from the top left to the top right. Figure 6 below is the homepage and is the main hub of the website.

![Figure 6: Website Homepage](image-url)
The first main tab at the top of the website is called the Framework. This page gives a description of not only the Framework but also an understanding of how to navigate each section of the website.

![Reading Roadmap Framework](image)

**Why a Reading Roadmap?** Every journey has a starting point and a destination. As teachers of literacy, it is our obligation and commitment to guide our students on their journey to become confident, proficient, and joyful readers. There are so many components to teaching children to read that it is difficult to know where to start. Some children will come into your class with little knowledge of books and how they work and some will already be reading. You must start the reading journey where they are.

We separated the components of reading into six sections, each represented by a car. Each section/car is an essential part of the journey towards being proficient readers. But the cars do not travel alone as each component of reading supports the others. While each of the elements are portrayed above separately, they all connect together to form a long road that once built and taught, leads to life-long readers. Sometimes students will need to travel in one car longer than others but all students must continue to move towards the final destination: making meaning of texts.

Each section of road can be used independently or connected together to build your Reading Roadmap for a day, a week, a month, and the year. You can navigate this website in several ways. Explore each of the elements to learn the what it is and why it is important, how to teach these skills, assessments, resources, and Framework examples. You can also examine lesson plans for each element and how to introduce and teach these skills within a daily framework.

**Daily Framework**

The Framework is created and driven by the use of assessment – FOR learning (pre), AS learning (during), and OF learning (post). Your decisions should always be based on what your students need to learn and master to become successful readers. Remember, explicit teaching of skills is an essential element of any reading program – don’t leave anything to chance.

1. Assessment: Determine where students are with their learning and next steps.
2. Lesson Focus: Choose one or more of the 5 pillars. Your decisions should always be based on what your students need to learn and master to become successful readers.
3. Whole Group: Explicit teaching of skill or strategy during a mini-lesson (3-15min) to the whole class.
4. Small Group or Individual Instruction: Teacher reinforces mini-lesson and/or concepts with students to assess individual reading goals.
5. Independent Practice: While teacher is working with small groups and/or individuals student complete independent practice of skills.

K-1: 5min whole group + 10min small group/ independent work + 5min whole group + 10min small group/ independent work...... etc. As the year progresses, the stamina of your students will develop and their ability to attend to instruction and tasks will increase.

Gr.2-3: 10-15min whole group + 20-30min small group/ independent work + 10-15min whole group + 20-30min small group/ independent work...... etc.
The Balanced Literacy page explains the importance to a well-rounded Literacy program within the classroom.

**Balanced Literacy**

Balanced Literacy acknowledges the reciprocal nature of reading and writing. The skills needed to become an effective reader do not happen in isolation and should be introduced, taught, and supported through many different literacy opportunities. While this website does not focus on writing, it is an essential part of a literacy program and does support reading acquisition.

**Literacy-Centred Classroom**

Classroom design is an important element to supporting literacy in the classroom. Literacy-rich classrooms have:

1. Children engaged in reading every day
2. Comfortable areas where children can read
3. A wide variety of fiction and non-fiction books organized and displayed
4. A wide variety of Good Fit books so all children can successfully read books in the class
5. Book Bins with approximately 4-5 Good Fit books
6. Word Web, alphabet charts and student work displayed for children to read
7. Plenty of opportunities to read to self, read with a buddy and to listen to reading
8. Daily Read Alouds
9. Adults who model the love of reading

**Problem-Solving Strategies**

Children need a variety of strategies to decode unknown words. Whenever strategy a child uses, it is important that they are always thinking when reading and asking themselves: Does this look right? Does this sound right? Does this make sense?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounding Out</th>
<th>Picture Check</th>
<th>Chunking/Word Families</th>
<th>Flip the Sound</th>
<th>Skip the Word</th>
<th>Reread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Most words that children encounter when reading can be sounded out successfully. Even non-typical words, like many sight words, can be sounded out to some degree. In order for this to happen, children must have a solid grasp of phonics skills and know how to blend the sounds together. In addition, children need to be aware if this word fits within its context. Does it look right, does it sound right, and does it make sense?

**Examples:**
- “The pig is big.”
- “All of the words in this sentence can be sounded out to some degree although ‘the’ and ‘is’ are often taught as sight words.
- “If the child sounded out the word ‘pig’ as p(i)g (the sound g sometimes mutes) they would know that it doesn’t make sense and would need to try again. Here they could then use other decoding strategies like picture clues or flip the sound but sounding it out gives the child an excellent starting point for decoding the word.”

*Figure 8: The Framework - Balanced Literacy.*
The Build by Grade page allows teachers to click into specific grade levels as well as see tables of critical skills developed by SD68. Teachers can click on any of the tabs and it will take them directly to the SD68 website and downloadable pdf’s of the documents.

**Figure 9: The Framework - Build by Grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>PHONEMIC AWARENESS</th>
<th>PHONICS</th>
<th>FLUENCY</th>
<th>COMPREHENSION</th>
<th>VOCABULARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRADE 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADE 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRADE 3</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the younger grades, you may want to spread your literacy time throughout the day as students' attention spans can be quite short. In older grades you may do one or two longer literacy blocks.

“For examples on how to schedule your literacy blocks, see Framework & Daily/Weekly Schedule Forms for downloadable PDF’s. For a summary of critical reading skills by grade level please see below.”

Click on the grade levels for specific content related to each grade. Scroll through the tabs below to see a Critical Skills continuum for K-3 from the Nanaimo/Ladysmith Public School District website. By clicking on the images, you will be taken directly to the NLPS document. Below the tabs are critical skills necessary within a comprehensive reading program.
The Kindergarten page provides Critical Skills necessary for that age level as well as exemplar daily literacy frameworks that can be used in the classroom. All links can be opened up and downloaded as pdf’s.

Figure 10: The Framework - Kindergarten
The Grade 1 page provides Critical Skills necessary for that age level as well as exemplar daily literacy frameworks that can be used in the classroom. All links can be opened up and downloaded as pdf’s.

Figure 11: The Framework - Grade 1
The Grade 2 and Grade 3 pages provide Critical Skills necessary for that age level as well as exemplar daily literacy frameworks that can be used in the classroom. All links can be opened up and downloaded as pdf's.

Figure 12: The Framework - Gr. 2 & 3
The Framework Resources page includes downloadable pdf’s for schedules, conferring, running records, videos, and current other resource links.

Figure 13: The Framework – Resources
The Early Learning tab provides information on Oral language as well as Concepts of Print.

**Oral Language**

- Oral language is the ability to understand spoken language and speak clearly to communicate thoughts and ideas.
- Speaking with correct grammar, including pronouns, subject-verb agreement, and tenses, helps children to develop their reading skills as test follows correct grammar and syntax.
- Oral language skills help children decode words when reading but also impacts "the more advanced language skills needed for comprehension" (Cain & Oakhill, 2007).
- Children from less speech-rich households and those whom speak English as a second language or dialect require extra support in building oral language skills.

**Concepts of Print**

- Concepts of Print refers to a child's basic understanding of how books and print works.
- Print concepts are:
  1. Print is what we read
  2. Letters and words have meaning
  3. There is a connection between the picture and the text
  4. We read from left to right and from top to bottom
  5. Books have a front, a back, and an author
  6. There are spaces between words
  7. All sentences end in punctuation
  8. There is a difference between a letter and a word
  9. When we are reading, we return over-at the end of a line
  10. Print matches spoken words

*Quotes adapted from Moret Clay

*Figure 14: Early Learning*
The Phonemic Awareness tab has multiple pages that can be accessed either directly from the main page (figure 15 below) or from the tab pull down menu. These include: What & Why, How, Assessment, Resources, and Framework (explicit for that element).

Figure 15: Phonemic Awareness - Main page
The Phonemic Awareness “What & Why” page explains the important components of this element of reading and why it needs to be taught.

- Phonemic awareness is the ability to distinguish, isolate and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) within a word.
- A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in speech.
- For example, the word cat has three phonemes represented by the sounds /k/ /a/ /t/. The word ship also has three phonemes represented by the sounds /s/ /h/ /ip/.
- Phonemic awareness is oral and auditory; it uses the ears.
- Phonemic awareness is not about letters and their sounds however it is an important skill for developing print/sound relationships.
- While phonemic awareness focuses on the sounds and not the letters of our language, there is research that suggests introducing letters in conjunction with practicing phonemic awareness activities can increase pre-reading skills.
- Phonemic awareness and phonics are not skills to be learned in isolation. Mastering the two skills will help support early reading and writing skills (see Framework: Sample Lesson 2).
- Phonemic awareness is a set of skills that range from simplest (isolating the initial phoneme) to the most complex (manipulating phonemes within a word).
- Phonemic awareness is a subset of the broader Phonological Awareness which includes awareness of syllables, onset and rime, distinguishing words in a sentence and rhyming. Many resources will present Phonological and Phonemic Awareness as interchangeable skills.

- **Initial Phoneme Isolation**: isolating the first sound in a word
- **Final Phoneme Isolation**: isolating the final (last) sound in a word
- **Medial Phoneme Isolation**: isolating the middle sound in a word
- **Phoneme Matching**: matching sounds within a word

**Being able to isolate individual sounds is a critical early phonemic awareness skill.**

- **Initial Phoneme Isolation**: Isolating the first sound in a word
  - What is the first sound in the word “dog”? (correct response is /d/)

- **Final Phoneme Isolation**: Isolating the final (last) sound in a word
  - What is the last sound in the word “dog”? (correct response is /g/)

- **Medial Phoneme Isolation**: Isolating the middle sound in a word
  - What is the sound you hear in the middle of the word “dog”? (correct response is /o/)

- **Phoneme Matching**: matching sounds within a word
  - **Initial Phonemes**: Which words begin with the same sound: dog, monkey, doughnut? (correct response is dog and doughnut)
  - **Final Phonemes**: Which words end with the same sound: dog, monkey, bag? (correct response is dog and bag)
  - **Medial Phonemes**: Which words have the same sound in the middle: dog, can, top? (correct response is dog and top)

*Figure 16: Phonemic Awareness - What & Why*
The Phonemic Awareness “How” page gives exemplars on the various different ways to teach this element of reading.

Songs and poetry are excellent ways to introduce, practice and master phonemic and phonological skills. Music, poems and movement are an engaging way for children to develop language skills.

Phonemic awareness Songs

Figure 17: Phonemic Awareness – How
The Phonemic Awareness “Assessment” page gives exemplars on different ways to assess as well as links to downloadable assessment pdf’s.

Figure 18: Phonemic Awareness – Assessment
The Phonemic Awareness “Resources” page gives links to more strategies, tools and other information related to this element of reading.

Figure 19: Phonemic Awareness – Resources
The Phonemic Awareness “Framework” page provides a reminder image for the Framework as well as a downloadable detailed lesson plan and necessary materials needed for this element of reading.
The Phonics tab has multiple pages that can be accessed either directly from the main page (figure 21 below) or from the tab pull down menu. These include: What & Why, How, Assessment, Resources, and Framework (explicit for that element).
The Phonics “What & Why” page explains the important components of this element of reading and why it needs to be taught.

- Phonics is the relationship between letters (graphemes) and the sounds they represent (phonemes).
- A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in speech whereas a grapheme is a letter, or group of letters, that makes one sound (phoneme).
- The teaching of phonics is essential to learning to read and write. Letters represent the sounds they need to decode words when reading and encode words when writing.
- The teaching of phonemic awareness and phonic awareness should be married. Research indicates that children who are taught explicit phonemic instruction in conjunction with phonics learn to read and write easier.
- Synthetic Phonics is a method of teaching about the written language through explicit instruction. Children are taught letter/sounds in the order that they appear most often (like s, a, t, n, p, l). Phonics knowledge can be solidified through organic discussions found in songs, poems, books or environmental print.

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Figure 22: Phonics - What & Why
The Phonics “How” page gives exemplars on the various different ways to teach this element of reading.

- Explicit (synthetic) phonics instruction is when sound/spelling correspondences are taught directly and systematically.
- Students are taught that letters represent sound and when blended together creates words. It is a ‘part to whole’ approach.
- Explicit phonics is taught in sequence, beginning with the most frequently used letters/graphemes.
- Research indicates that this is the most effective way to teach phonics for all students.
- Reciprocity is the connection between reading and writing. When learning phonics it is important to not only learn the phonics rules by sight but be able to use them in spelling.

*Figure 23: Phonics - How*
The Phonics “Assessment” page gives exemplars on different ways to assess as well as links to downloadable assessment pdf’s.
The Phonics “Resources” page gives links to more strategies, tools and other information related to this element of reading.
The Phonics “Framework” page provides a reminder image for the Framework as well as a downloadable detailed lesson plan and necessary materials needed for this element of reading.
The Fluency tab has multiple pages that can be accessed either directly from the main page (figure 27 below) or from the tab pull down menu. These include: What & Why, How, Assessment, Resources, and Framework (explicit for that element).

*Figure 27: Fluency - Main Page*
The Fluency “What & Why” page explains the important components of this element of reading and why it needs to be taught.

- However, once you do understand the instruction manual you can build a solid bike....but all you have done so far is figured out how the pieces go together (decoding).

Figure 28: Fluency - What & Why
The Fluency “How” page gives exemplars on the various different ways to teach this element of reading.

- Read aloud daily to your students. You are modeling how a fluent reader sounds during reading. While they are eating lunch is a great time to read a novel and show what good readers do.
- Introduce new words to students and practice the new words many different times, with them.
- Build connections with families and encourage read-alouds at home. Start a home reading program, or invite families in to read first thing in the morning. Have volunteers come in to read to groups of students.
- Have older students record their voice reading their favorite story and allow younger students to listen to the stories while following along.

Figure 29: Fluency - How
The Fluency “Assessment” page gives exemplars on different ways to assess as well as links to downloadable assessment pdf’s.

Figure 30: Fluency – Assessment
The Fluency “Resources” page gives links to more strategies, tools and other information related to this element of reading.

Figure 31: Fluency – Resources
The Fluency “Framework” page provides a reminder image for the Framework as well as a downloadable detailed lesson plan and necessary materials needed for this element of reading.
The Comprehension tab has multiple pages that can be accessed either directly from the main page (figure 33 below) or from the tab pull down menu. These include: What & Why, How, Assessment, Resources, and Framework (explicit for that element).

Figure 33: Comprehension - Main Page
The Comprehension “What & Why” page explains the important components of this element of reading and why it needs to be taught.

*Figure 34: Comprehension - What & Why*
The Comprehension “How” page gives exemplars on the various different ways to teach this element of reading.
The Comprehension “Assessment” page gives exemplars on different ways to assess as well as links to downloadable assessment pdf’s.

Figure 36: Comprehension - Assessment
The Comprehension “Resources” page gives links to more strategies, tools and other information related to this element of reading.

Figure 37: Comprehension - Resources
The Comprehension “Framework” page provides a reminder image for the Framework as well as a downloadable detailed lesson plan and necessary materials needed for this element of reading.

Figure 38: Comprehension - Framework
The Vocabulary tab has multiple pages that can be accessed either directly from the main page (figure 39 below) or from the tab pull down menu. These include: What & Why, How, Assessment, Resources, and Framework (explicit for that element).

Figure 39: Vocabulary - Main Page
The Vocabulary “What & Why” page explains the important components of this element of reading and why it needs to be taught.

- Teaching unknown words and their meanings (some words have multiple meanings based on the context used in a sentence).
- New vocabulary is learned both indirectly and directly, with explicit instruction (teaching in authentic, engaging ways increases vocabulary retention).
- Exposure to Vocabulary should happen in lessons and inquiries, in natural situations. For example, during a read aloud, pause and discuss specific words and their usage (context) in the story. Teach and discuss relevant vocabulary in a Science Unit and apply it.
- Let students bring in new vocabulary they are interested in and have class discussions about it. Add it to a vocabulary wall (only after discussion). Get students excited about learning and using new Vocabulary. Teach how to find or use synonym words for basic words such BIG (giant, immense, enormous etc.).

Figure 40: Vocabulary - What & Why
The Vocabulary “How” page gives exemplars on the various different ways to teach this element of reading.

Figure 41: Vocabulary - How
The Vocabulary “Assessment” page gives exemplars on different ways to assess as well as links to downloadable assessment pdf’s.
The Vocabulary “Resources” page gives links to more strategies, tools and other information related to this element of reading.

Figure 43: Vocabulary - Resources
The Vocabulary “Framework” page provides a reminder image for the Framework as well as a downloadable detailed lesson plan and necessary materials needed for this element of reading.

Figure 44: Vocabulary - Framework
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

Summary

Designing a practical reading roadmap for new K-3 Teachers seems like such a simplistic endeavor: take what I know about teaching reading in the classroom, research extensively to make sure I know and understand the process of teaching and learning how to read, develop and create graphics that help teachers understand and remember the important elements in reading, and design a simple, easy to follow website built for new K-3 Teachers based on current, empirical research. What transpired was a very fulfilling and life-changing journey into the complex world of understanding how students learn to read. How teaching reading is an intricate dance of unraveling complex ideologies into simple steps for learners, how designing a website that is easy to use takes countless hours and endless revisions, and the realization on how important this website is for all Teachers, not just for the new K-3 teachers we were targeting with our initial inquiry question.

Initially the goal was to develop a website that would highlight the basic, skeletal elements necessary for teaching reading in a primary classroom. The design would consist of the 5 key elements I thought were necessary for reading instruction and it would be simple and easy enough to implement into any teachers classroom after a few clicks of the mouse on the website. The 5 key elements are definitely foundational pillars necessary for learning how to read, however, it became apparent that along with those elements are other fundamentals that are needed in order to have a well-balanced literacy program. Which then posed a difficult question; do we create a website designed with only part of the answer to keep the initial concept of simple and minimal as to not overwhelm new teachers or do we redesign and build the website into something bigger, more complex, which does a better job of creating an entire picture of teaching
We chose the latter while putting a disclaimer on the home page to give teachers permission to just learn one new thing on the website at a time, and implement it. Rome was not built in a day, and neither is creating a solid literacy program in the classroom: it takes time, understanding, and acquisition of key concepts. Then comes the job of actually teaching it to the students! The website currently entails 40 pages of foundational elements of reading, frameworks for weekly, daily and individual lesson plans, videos, and countless supportive documents created explicitly for the site by Kelly Inglis and myself. Everything necessary to start teaching reading in a primary classroom is available on the website with a lot of the content linked to downloadable pdf’s.

The development and design of the website was and is a labor of love, with many endless hours building and rebuilding pages, graphics and layouts. It was an endeavor that we were not sure we could pull off alone, but with initial support and help of my son, Emery Coughtry who taught us how to use WordPress with Divi builder added, our learning curve was swift and rapid. Sometimes it is good not to know where you will end up before you embark on a journey, because had we known how laborious and in-depth our project would become, I would have been terrified at the thought of completing it. As the website continued to grow and expand, we began to realize that this project was becoming more then support for new K-3 teachers but support for all teachers who encounter diverse needs of students in their reading abilities, on a daily basis in their classroom, no matter the grade level. As this website is a living, current webpage, we will continue to promote and invest time into creating an even better space for all teachers who need support in teaching reading in their classroom. We have even created and linked a Facebook and Instagram page devoted to Reading Roadmap so that educators can come
together and discuss their current needs within their classrooms, as well as pre-service teachers and teachers teaching on Call.

**Suggestions for further development**

Moving forward, our next steps for our website are three-fold: 1. Begin to get the word out about our website to our local School District. 2. Connect teachers with our social media sites (Facebook and Instagram) so that there is an immediate platform for questions and answers. 3. Continue to develop and modify the website so that it remains current and useful to our target audience.

Our immediate goal is to promote our website by presenting several workshops over the course of the next few months: one for preservice teachers, one for teachers during our school district Pro-D Day, and a 4 part series for both preservice and teachers. The 4 part series will take place over four consecutive Thursdays during the month of April and will delve deeper into the website. Teachers will use time to learn how to use the website, spend time searching the site, ask any questions that might arise, and provide us with ongoing feedback for things that may be useful in the future or that needs adjusting to be more user-friendly. In conjunction with the workshops, we will also be promoting the website through our own social media platforms, at the District level to colleagues, and through our local Union media. By having a Facebook group specifically for the Reading Roadmap, we are helping support even more teachers by answering their questions, providing a space where teachers of all capabilities can ask for, or give support, and upload files that are shareable amongst the group.

It is also our goal to have the Reading Roadmap website maintain its integrity, as well as stay current with future research. It is a project that both Kelly Inglis and I are passionate about and want to see it be a useful, living and breathing entity to help support teachers for many years.
to come. It is not a website designed solely for the purpose of our Masters in Educational Leadership. We want to help support and nurture K-3 educators of today and tomorrow.

Limitations

As discussed previously in this thesis, reading should always go hand in hand with writing. The website is limited to teaching reading even though writing is also an important aspect to a balanced literacy program. It was a conscious choice to keep writing out of the website as we felt that it would further complicate an already overwhelming area of instruction. Expanding the website to include writing would be adding an entirely new layer, essentially doubling what we have already done. That is not to say it isn’t relevant but more of a double edge sword: we want to keep the website simple enough to not overwhelm teachers but we also don’t want to leave a major component, such as writing, out of the equation. Moving forward, we could add another section onto the website that explores writing and how best to instruct and teach it within the classroom, in-conjunction with a solid reading program.

Another limitation is the fact that the website has become so much more complex than we originally anticipated. By doing so, we have opened up the possibility of servicing more teachers than our original intended audience. It also means that we could be easily overwhelming the very audience for which the website was created. With a lot of reflection, I think it is important to share the whole story of teaching reading versus delivering the skeletal features void of certain necessary elements. Even as I type this, there are things we innately do while teaching reading, that is so automatic, we forget that new teachers have never had access to that information. There are also countless components both big and small in teaching reading that have not made the website yet (such as using sight words).
Final thoughts

The key learning that I have taken away from all of the research and website development is just how vast and intricate teaching reading is within the classroom. It is not just solely an understanding of certain elements of reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. It is the interconnectedness of all the elements combined, interwoven and embedded throughout each other, and includes things such as early literacy, concepts of print, and oral language. It is the added understanding and weaving back and forth of the reciprocity between reading and writing. It is the knowing, understanding, and instructing in a differentiated manner, holding inclusivity at the heart of all lessons that develop students from where they are, moving them towards becoming life-long readers and learners. It is the teaching of the new BC curriculum: the core competencies, the big ideas, the curricular competencies, and content. It is the risk taking, the being brave and vulnerable while teaching, learning, and growing. It is the juggling of expectations and struggles, finding self-efficacy, and locating the help and support that we all need to do this job. Finally, it is having a life jacket available at all times, that I so desperately needed, for support along the journey of teaching reading as a new K-3 teacher in the classroom. My hope is that if this website serves that purpose for even one teacher in the coming months and years, then this project has been an absolute success.
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