

Teaching Readers (Not Reading):  
Moving Beyond Skills and Strategies  
to Reader-Focused Instruction

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# Overview

Teaching readers, Not reading:  
Consulting the **sciences** of reading

A simple task

The sciences of reading and responsive teaching:  
Metacognition, motivation and engagement, and self-efficacy

Matthew Effects and Zones of proximal development

Conclusions

Much of this presentation derives from  
two recently published books...

In which I investigate the array of  
factors that impact students' reading  
development and reading achievement

Handbook of  
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES  
IN READING

Reader, Text, and Context



Edited by  
PETER AFFLERBACH



# Teaching Readers

[*Not Reading*]

Moving Beyond Skills and Strategies  
to Reader-Focused Instruction



PETER AFFLERBACH

# Teaching Reading

**Focus:** Cognitive strategies and skills

**Evidentiary base:** National Reading Panel Report, The “Big 5” of NCLB, Research on the “science of reading”

**Learning outcomes:** Strategy development;  
Understanding content in texts

# Teaching Readers

**Focus:** Cognitive strategies and skills, metacognition, motivation and engagement, and self-efficacy

**Evidentiary base:** Research on the “sciences of reading”

**Learning outcomes:** Strategic and skillful readers; Independent readers, Motivated readers, Readers with strong belief in self, Critical readers, Learning with text

Two examples from Facebook communities  
that help illustrate the  
teaching readers/teaching reading  
difference...

**I was just listening to the Science of Reading podcast and they mentioned there were about 17 micro skills of comprehension. Does anyone have a resource that lists them?**

3

4 Comments

Like

Comment

Send

All comments ▾



**Carrie Ann**

I honestly just googled "17 micro skills of comprehension" and some stuff came up to read. Thanks for bringing this up, because I'll be taking a look.

Like Reply ⌵



**Cassie Bailey**

Interested!

Like Reply ⌵



**Whitney Warner**

I googled it and didn't really come up with anything. Can you point us to a certain website?

Like Reply ⌵



**Julie Souza** Author

**Whitney Warner** that's the problem. I don't have a website. They mentioned it on the podcast and I was hoping there would be a resource that listed them. I noticed someone here posted micro skills of writing from a training, so I was hoping someone had a similar resource for reading.

Like Reply ⌵



Write an answer...





**Ann Turner**

F & P barely touches on phonics, and their assessments combine decoding with comprehension so that you don't know where you are at. So many children have comprehension well beyond their decoding, so that an assessment like this is meaningless. I would rather test a child on a limited number of isolated words, one a list of three-letter words and the other a list of high-priority words that are not necessarily phonetic.-

Like Reply Share 8w

One of my biggest concerns here is that while the effort, compassion and desire to help children is evident, it is only partially informed by what we know about how to help each and every student reader.

*A simple task*

Please read the following paragraph. As you are reading, please note the strategies you are using.

It is legitimate to further characterize the broadpoint appearance as a major archeological horizon marker for the eastern seaboard. In the terms of Willey and Phillips, a horizon is “a primarily spatial continuity represented by cultural traits and assemblages whose nature and mode of occurrence permit the assumption of a broad and rapid spread.” That a quick expansion of the broadpoint-using peoples took place is indicated by the narrow range of available radiocarbon dates, along with a correspondingly wide areal distribution of components. Once established, the broadpoint horizon developed as a “whole cultural pattern or tradition” in its own right by persisting and evolving over an expansive region for 500 to 1000 years.

I've asked thousands of accomplished readers to report on the strategies they use to try to construct meaning from this "broadpoint" paragraph.

These readers regularly report similar phenomena...

## Cognitive strategies used by expert readers...

Scanning and skimming the text to “size up”  
the task at hand

Noting text is from discipline of anthropology  
or archeology

Accessing relevant prior knowledge, if available

Making inferences

Assigning importance to words and phrases

## Cognitive strategies used by expert readers...

Focusing on vocabulary (e.g., horizon, broadpoint)

Visualizing text contents

Using context to determine meaning of words

Parsing text into shorter, more manageable segments or chunks of text

Paraphrasing and translating sections of the text into more familiar terms

# Metacognitive strategies used by expert readers...

Setting a goal for reading

Slowing the rate of reading

Re-reading

Adjusting goals for reading

Changing reading strategies when comprehension is perceived not to be proceeding smoothly

Self-evaluating near and far progress

Other things reported by expert readers,  
even as they are not requested...

Initial, high motivation because of challenging  
nature of the reading and readers' belief in self

Related initial high engagement with task followed  
by waning engagement

Frustration with the inability to understand the text

Annoyance with the guy asking you to do this task

Questioning of one's reading ability

Other things reported by expert readers,  
even as they are not requested...

Diminished self-efficacy

Frustration because the reader cannot critically  
evaluate text, nor judge the truthfulness  
of the author

Discomfort due to inability to determine the  
reliability or accuracy of the information in text

Conceding to challenging text; degree of success is  
not representative of reader's general ability

# What is learned from this experience?

Expert readers use a core of powerful reading comprehension strategies

Prior knowledge and experience are necessary for constructing meaning

Metacognition is central to reading success

Strategic reading is accompanied by important phenomena of motivation and engagement, and self-efficacy

In fact...

Metacognition

Motivation and engagement

Self-efficacy

...are representatives of the broad “sciences  
of reading.”

If we continue to focus only on cognitive strategies and skills, we continue to **teach reading**.

In contrast, if we incorporate instruction and classroom experiences focused on metacognition, motivation and engagement, and self-efficacy we evolve to **teach readers**.



BTW, **broadpoint** is a type of **arrowhead**

# Rope vs. Caterpillar

# SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE (2001)

## LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

**BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE**  
(facts, concepts, etc.)

**VOCABULARY**  
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

**LANGUAGE STRUCTURE**  
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

**VERBAL REASONING**  
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

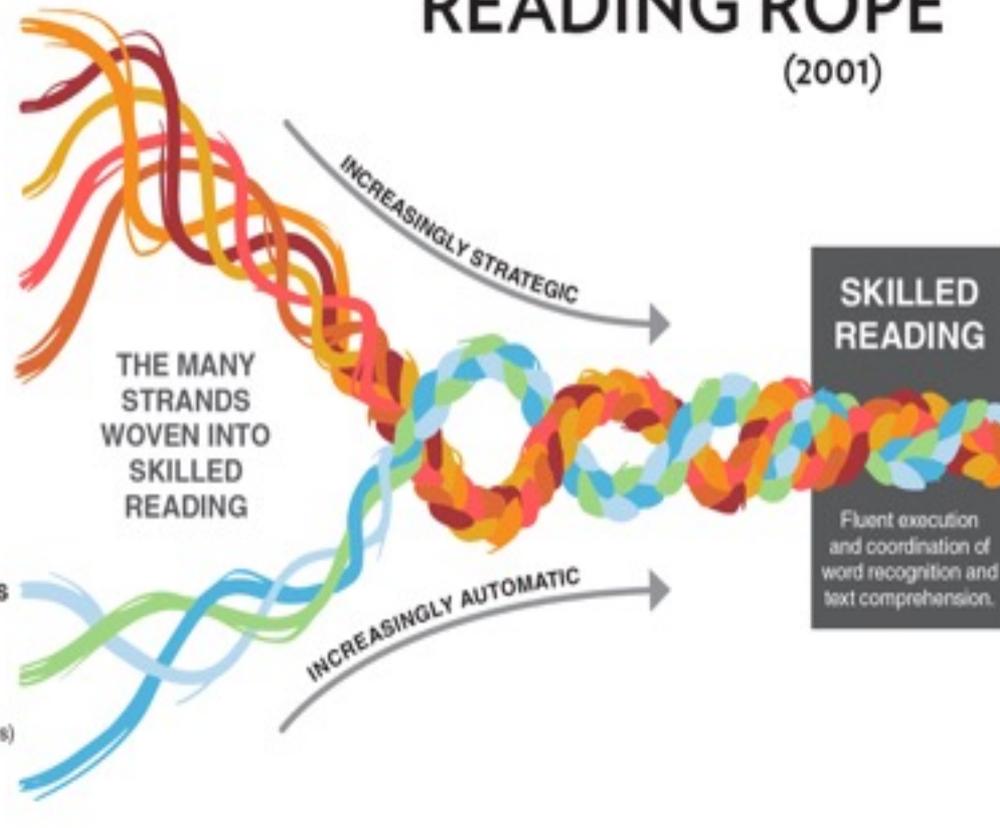
**LITERACY KNOWLEDGE**  
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

## WORD RECOGNITION

**PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS**  
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

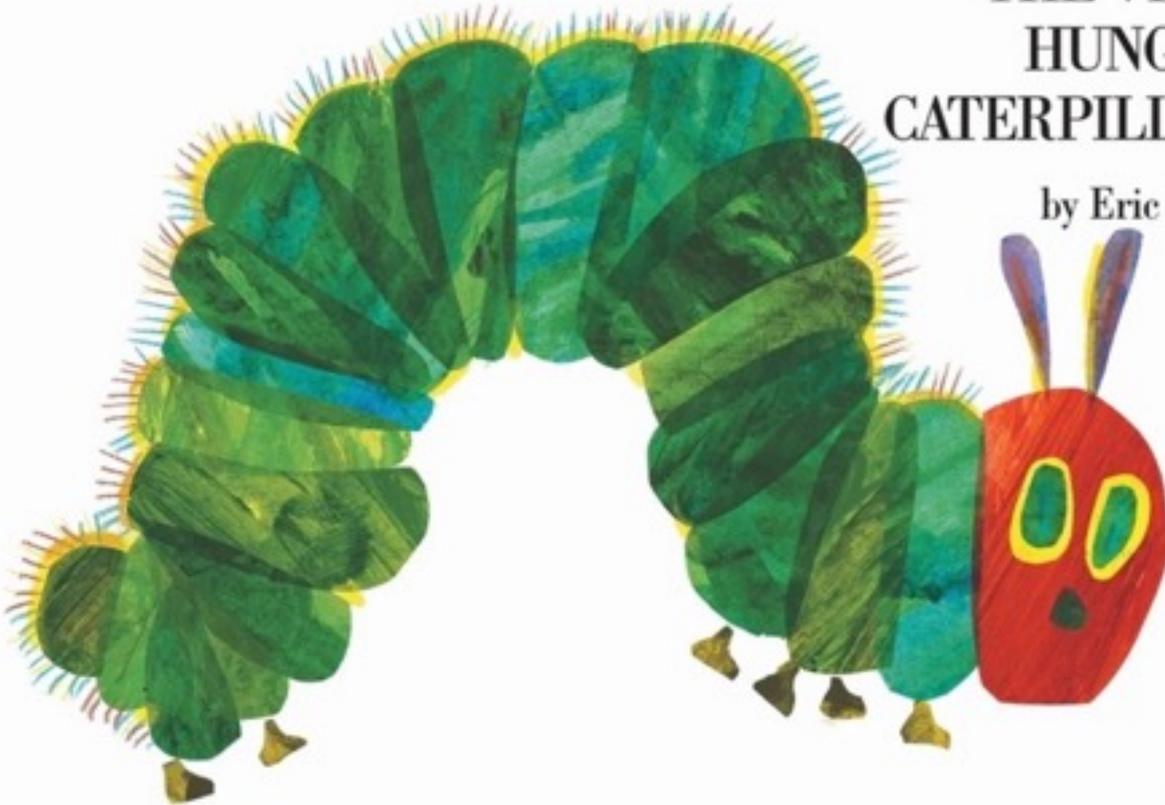
**DECODING**  
(alphabetic principle,  
spelling-sound correspondences)

**SIGHT RECOGNITION**  
(of familiar words)



# THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR

by Eric Carle



## A Tale of Two Ways to Respond

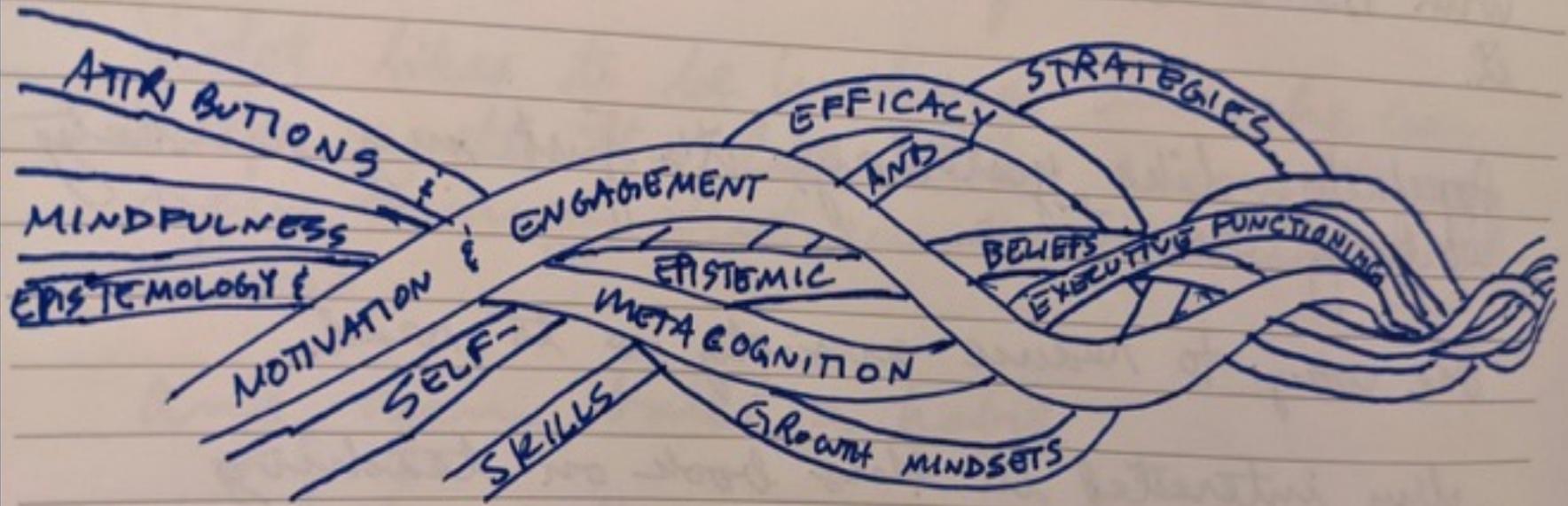
Does the rope strangle the caterpillar?

Does the caterpillar eat the rope?

Does the rope guide the caterpillar?

Does the caterpillar incorporate the rope  
in building a cocoon, resulting in a  
beautiful new creature?

The “science of reading” or  
“The sciences of reading?”



A BETTER READING MODEL - A BRAID?  
 A  
 READER

**Matt Renwick@ReadByExample**

Here's one of my responses as a reader to the book Teaching Readers (Not Reading): Instead of a \*reading\* rope, what about a \*reader\* braid? Unravel to understand students' unique needs yet always remember the whole child.

# The Sciences of Reading: Metacognition

# Metacognition

Self-awareness

Executive function

Comprehension monitoring

Mindfulness

The ability to understand connections between the many factors and mindsets that influence reading

Appreciation

# Metacognition: The Research

“...is knowledge about cognition, awareness of one’s own thinking processes, comprehension of requirements for learning, control of learning processes, and regulation of cognitive procedures...the mindful regulation of one’s own learning processes (is) the “heart of metacognition.”

(Borkowski & Turner, 1990)

Metacognition has positive influence on reading comprehension (Paris, 1986)

Metacognitive students understand the relationship between their effort and reading outcomes, and this contributes to increased motivation and engagement

(Guthrie & Wigfield, 2020)

# Metacognition: Teaching Readers

Veenman et al. (2006) suggest three general goals in teaching readers:

Use explicit teaching that focuses on the value of metacognition

Situate metacognition instruction in authentic learning contexts

Provide continual teaching of metacognitive mindsets and strategies.

Like cognitive reading strategies,  
metacognitive reading strategies are  
amenable to:

Modeling

Explaining

Thinking aloud

## Checklists Scaled to Task and Student Developmental Level

- \_\_\_\_\_ Does that make sense?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do I understand?

Followed by...

- \_\_\_\_\_ Is there a problem with my understanding?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What is the problem?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Can I fix it?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How can I fix it?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did I fix it?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Can I get back on track?

## Followed by...

- \_\_\_\_\_ Have I understood the story?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What do I already know about the author and the stories the author has written?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Who are the main characters in the stories?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What are their traits, motivations, and feelings?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Does my response address all aspects of the standard?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did I understand the story?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do I understand all of the parts of this question?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did I use my prior knowledge about the plot, the setting, and the author?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Can I characterize the traits and motivations of the main characters?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Can I carefully manage all the tasks involved in this standard?

The aim of good teachers should, of course, be to make themselves redundant. If we are to properly educate others, we must enable them to become independent learners.

—David Whitebread

# The Sciences of Reading: Motivation and Engagement

# Motivation and Engagement: The Research

Reading engagement is the joint functioning of motivational processes and cognitive strategies during reading (Guthrie, 2020).

Reading competence may be achieved through the co-development of knowledge of reading and text, text processing skills and strategies, and personal commitment and motivation (Alexander, 2005).

# Motivation and Engagement: The Research

“...engagement in reading can be a consequence, as well as a cause, of higher reading skill, but the evidence suggests that these two factors are mutually reinforcing.”

(PISA/OECD, 2004)

The negative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage can be “pushed back” in schools and classrooms where students have access to a rich print environment and become actively engaged with literacy.

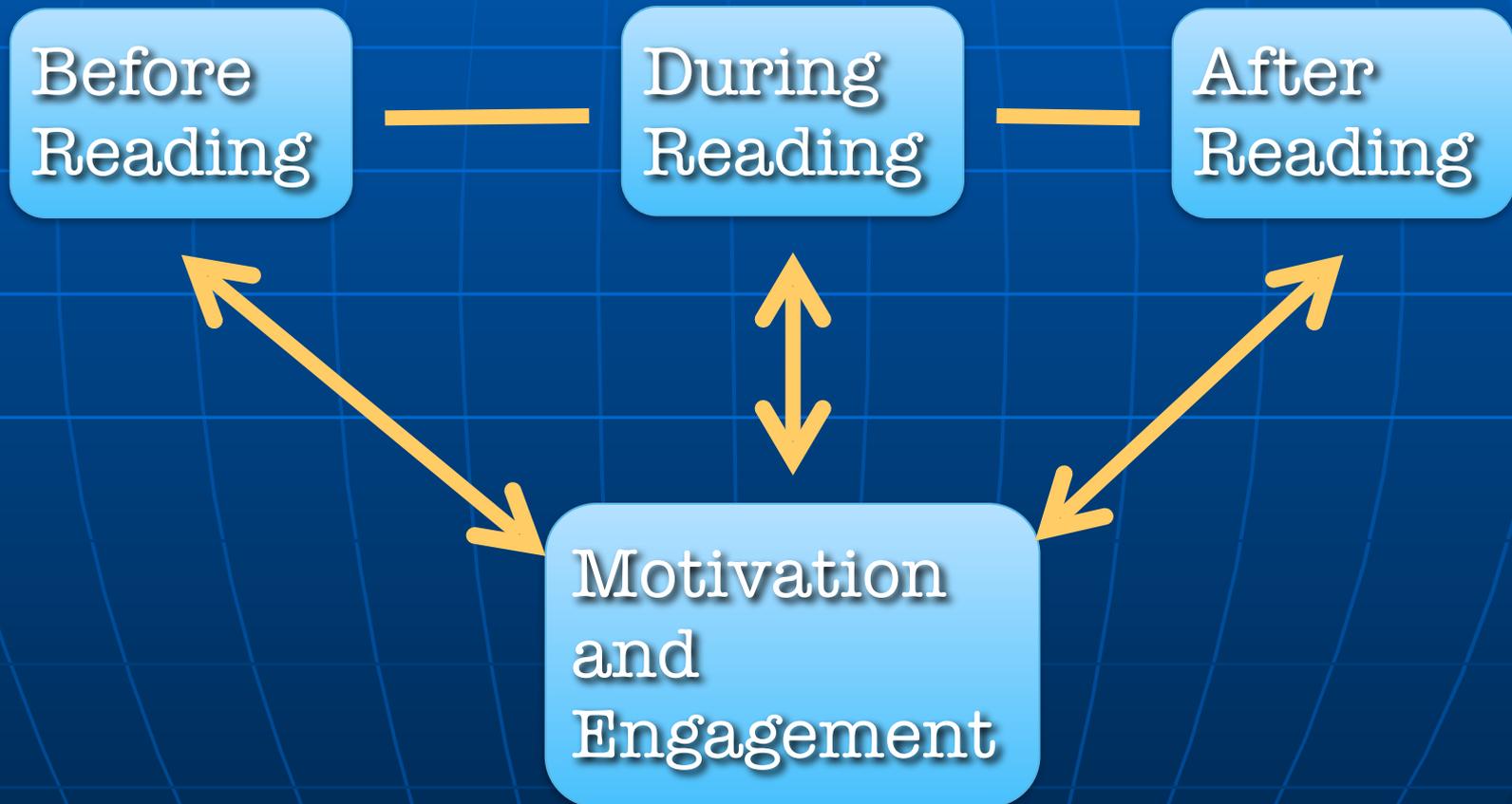
(Cummins, 2015)

# Motivation and Engagement

Engaged readers are motivated to:

- choose to read for a variety of purposes and comprehend the texts in the context of the situation
- persevere when reading is challenging
- elect a wide range of literacy activities for aesthetic enjoyment, knowledge gain, and interactions with others
- read for their own motivations which activate the self-regulation of higher-order reading strategies.

# An example: How do motivation and engagement influence reading?



## Motivation and Engagement: Teaching Readers

- helping students set desired learning goals, as well as goals for performance that are appropriately challenging;
- creating learning experiences that students value;
  - supporting students' sense of control and autonomy

# Motivation and Engagement: Teaching Readers

- developing students' sense of competency by helping them to recognize, monitor, and strategize about their learning progress;
- asking students to use what they learn through reading in meaningful tasks;
- creating an emotionally supportive and nonthreatening learning environment where learners feel safe and valued.

# The Sciences of Reading: Self-efficacy

## Self-efficacy

Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more central or pervasive than belief of personal efficacy. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act, or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions (Bandura, 2006).

## Self-efficacy: The Research

Students' low self-efficacy contributes to:

Diminished motivation to read  
(Wigfield, et al., 2019)

Lower self-regulation  
(Pajares, 1996)

Task avoidance  
(Bandura, 1993)

While high self-efficacy moves students  
in the opposite direction...

# Self-efficacy: Teaching Readers

Teachers encouraging students' self-efficacy provide:

Mastery experiences: Nothing succeeds like success

Modeling: This is what working for and attaining goals looks and feels like

Supportive and directive feedback

Emotional and physical experiences

Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act, or to persevere in the face of difficulties.

# Assessments for When We Are Teaching Readers

Reading Self-efficacy Questionnaire Carroll & Fox, 2017

Myself As A Learner Scale Burden, 2000

Children's Perceived Self-efficacy Bandura, 1990

Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory  
Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002

Motivations for Reading Questionnaire  
Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997

# The Matthew effect

## Matthew effect in reading

Readers of differing skill soon diverge in the amount of practice they receive at reading and writing activities. They also have different histories of success, failure, and reward in the context of academic tasks. The long-term effects of such differing histories could act to create other cognitive and behavioral differences between readers of varying skill.

(Stanovich, 1986)

# Borrowing The Matthew effect

A reciprocal relationship between **vocabulary** knowledge and **reading comprehension** results in the exponential growth of some students' reading achievement.

Might we substitute **motivation and engagement, self-efficacy, and metacognition**, in the above statement to determine influences, and reciprocal relationships?

The Matthew effect as an appropriate metaphor used in examining student development in addition to (and in relation to) cognitive skill and strategy

# Representative Interactions

Metacognition

Reading strategy development

Self-efficacy

Motivation and engagement



# Consider the “Reverse Matthew Effect” related to struggling readers

Struggling 10 year old readers may have spent  
**one-half of their lives**  
with “poor” reader experiences

Self-efficacy, motivation and metacognition  
are often missing.

Struggling readers’ theories of self and  
attributions for their performance  
may be wildly inaccurate, but they are powerful.

**Does all the high-quality instruction in the world  
matter to the student who is convinced  
that he or she cannot achieve?**

Do our classrooms reflect a balance of the diverse factors involved in learning to read and being an enthusiastic student reader?

Sciences oR

Motivation and engagement

Self-efficacy

Metacognition

Attributions for performance

SoR

Word recognition

Fluency

Vocabulary

Comprehension

# Zones of Proximal Development

What are we looking for in terms of student growth and zones of proximal development?

Strategy and skill development

A positive attitude towards reading and reading tasks

A belief in self that reflects self-efficacy

Motivations that feed engagement

Metacognition that helps students manage small and great undertakings, and that allows them to reflect on their challenges and successes

# Science of reading, zones of proximal development, and effective instruction

Student's next level of growth and achievement

Cognitive skills  
Cognitive strategies

Student's current level of growth and achievement

# Moving through zones of proximal development: Teaching and the gradual release of responsibility

Scaffolding

Explaining

Modeling

Supporting

Thinking aloud

# Sciences of reading, zones of proximal development, and effective instruction

Student's next level of growth and achievement

Motivation and engagement  
Self-efficacy  
Metacognition

Student's current level of growth and achievement

## Conclusions

We must teach readers and avoid teaching reading.

Teaching readers allows us to draw from the broad sciences of reading, moving beyond strategy and skill instruction to focus also on metacognition, motivation and engagement, self-efficacy, and other influential factors.

While cognitive skill and strategy are requisite for reading development and success, they do not account for all that must be “working” for students to succeed.

## Conclusions

While my presentation focused on reading and teaching readers, the influences of motivation and engagement, metacognition, and self-efficacy are, of course, schoolwide and lifelong.

Thank you!

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