

Teaching Readers Who Struggle: A Pragmatic Middle School Framework

[Gwynne Ellen Ash](#)

Abstract

This article suggests a pragmatic framework for reading instruction that attends to the needs of learners aged 11 to 14 years who struggle. Five practices—daily oral or shared reading, guided reading in flexible groups, word study, self-selected extended reading and writing, and explicit comprehension strategy instruction—form the basis of the framework. Its origin is in classroom experience, work with middle school teachers, and a synthesis of successful tutoring programs and critical literacy theories. The framework is suggested to guide classroom teachers in planning and organizing literacy instruction for young adolescent students at all levels of literacy development.

Introduction

For a long time I had been reluctant to see myself as a teacher of literature; I preferred teacher of reading. But my seventh and eighth graders know how to read. While I certainly do teach lessons about comprehension, speed, and strategies, I am primarily a teacher of literature. ([Atwell, 1998](#), p. 46)

If the learning disabilities resource teacher was no longer going to provide direct reading instruction to Brett (a rising seventh grader reading on a second-grade level), then who was going to teach him to read—his middle-school English teacher, science teacher, math teacher? This seemed highly unlikely. ([Morris, Ervin, & Conrad, 1996](#), pp. 369-370)

These contrasting views of what it means to be a middle school language arts teacher working with learners aged approximately 11 to 14 years illustrate the conflict between perceived roles and practical realities. Middle school teachers are often perceived to be, like Nancie Atwell, teachers of literature, but the literacy needs of students often do not seem to be a part of the curriculum, in middle schools or schools of education. [Vacca \(1997\)](#) argues that literacy instruction for young adolescents is not valued by “political leaders, policy makers, curriculum planners, and school administrators” (p. 3) (see also [Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999](#); [Santa 1998](#); [Vacca, 1998](#)). Unfortunately, the reality of middle school classrooms seems at odds with the expectation that a language arts teacher in the middle school is solely a teacher of literature. Every day, middle school teachers encounter students like Brett, students who have reached middle school still needing much support in their reading. According to the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress, 74 percent of eighth graders have not reached a proficient level in their reading, and 26 percent of those students have not reached a basic level ([National Association of Educational Statistics, 1999](#), p. 6). As teachers and researchers have noted, many middle school students have difficulty becoming proficient readers, and these students struggle with a variety of challenges: word identification strategies, vocabulary, spelling, fluency, self-monitoring comprehension, and integrated strategy use ([Allington, 1983](#); [Ivey, 1999a, 1999b](#); [Ivey & Broaddus, 2000](#); [Kos, 1991](#); [Lee & Neal, 1992/1993](#); [Morris et al., 1996](#)).

Because of the reality of having students who struggle with literacy, middle school teachers are greatly concerned that they are not meeting these students’ needs; further, many teachers are not sure about how to make their students’ needs a focus of instruction ([Ash, 2000](#)). As a participant in my dissertation study, Victoria (a pseudonym), expressed her distress in searching for a realistic way to meet those needs,

This is my fourth year teaching sixth grade. I think the biggest frustration I’ve seen with the struggling readers that I have are the kids who fall between the cracks, who don’t qualify for the special programs, or Title I, or

for any outside reading [instruction]. It's hard to reach those kids in a class of 30 many times. Even if it's 8 to 10 of those kids, it's hard to stop and go back and teach with that large of a class. And that's my biggest frustration.

Middle school language arts teachers might like to be in Nancie Atwell's position and have every student in their classroom reading proficiently. However, many instead share Victoria's "biggest frustration", and they are unlikely to be prepared to help the students in their classrooms who do struggle with literacy.

What might help teachers create a pragmatic framework for teaching literacy in middle school classrooms in a way that is responsive to students' needs? This article attempts to synthesize practices that may make it more likely that *all* middle school students become proficient readers through the instruction they encounter in their regular reading or language arts classrooms. The framework of practices presented here has been developed through my experiences as a middle school reading and language arts teacher in San Antonio, Texas, USA, my ongoing professional development work with middle school teachers in Georgia and Delaware, and my working knowledge of current research on middle school readers, their needs, and best practices in literacy instruction. I hope that this framework might serve to offer some suggestions for middle school teachers who want information on how to help provide effective literacy instruction for those students who are struggling with reading.

Becoming Pragmatic

Pragmatism looks for practical applications of research and pedagogy above and beyond personal theoretical stances, and the framework presented in this article is grounded in the recent reappraisal of pragmatism ([Dillon, O'Brien, & Heilman, 2000](#)). In the search for practical applications, pragmatism values the synthesis of varied, and sometimes conflicting, ideas into useful new theories and practices. In using teachers' input, focusing on the problem of a lack of practical support structures for middle school literacy instruction, and combining traditional methodologies with more critical recommendations for literacy instruction, this framework reflects modern pragmatism (Dillon et al., 2000).

For example, many of the tutoring practices that serve as the basis for the framework are already a part of effective instructional organizations on the elementary level (e.g., Four Blocks, [Cunningham, Hall, & Defee, 1991](#)). But a similar coordinated framework of practices has not been proposed for middle level readers. Although much of the literature in middle school literacy instruction recommends a largely individualized, reading workshop approach toward literacy instruction (Atwell, 1998; Ivey & Broaddus, 2000; [Rief, 1992](#)), many teachers find the workshop approach overwhelming. They have expressed frustration with trying to meet with 150 students in conferences daily, or even weekly, and they have concerns that they are not meeting the students' direct instructional needs through the workshop (Ash, 2000). Teachers I have worked with often ask for more structure to make sure that they are satisfying both the students' needs and the district or state's requirements. Further, researchers have noted that the literacy demands on young adolescents have changed dramatically, and middle school literacy instruction needs to reflect those demands ([Moje, Young, Redence, & Moore, 2000](#)). In combining these varying perspectives, the framework presented here suggests a structure for balanced literacy instruction in the middle school language arts classroom.

Evaluating Lessons Learned From Tutoring

The framework is derived from a synthesis of practices from successful tutoring programs that met the needs of struggling upper elementary and middle school students (Lee & Neal, 1993; Morris et al., 1996; [Tancock, 1994](#)). Each program shared six instructional practices: oral reading practice, guided reading, word study, reading self-selected books independently, writing about reading, and learning and using strategies for comprehension. These practices were very successful in helping the tutored students become more proficient in their literacy learning, and they form the foundation for the pragmatic framework for classroom literacy practices (see Table 1).

Table 1
Connections Between Student Needs, Successful Tutoring Practices, and the Framework of Classroom Practices

Student Needs	Tutoring Practices	The Framework of Classroom Practices
Fluency, word identification	Oral reading practice	Daily oral or shared reading
Self-monitoring comprehension, integrated strategy use (word identification and comprehension strategies)	Guided reading	Guided reading in flexible groups
Word identification, vocabulary, and spelling	Word study	Word study in guided reading groups
Fluency, vocabulary, self-monitoring comprehension, integrated strategy use (word identification and comprehension strategies)	Reading interesting, self-selected books independently	Self-selected extended reading and writing
Writing fluency	Writing about reading	
Self-monitoring, comprehension, integrated strategy use	Learning and using strategies for comprehension	Comprehension strategy instruction

In the creation of the framework, writing about reading was integrated into other areas as an aspect of both teacher- and peer-led guided reading as well as self-selected extended reading and writing. This integration led to a framework of five classroom practices:

- Daily oral or shared reading
- Teacher- and peer-led guided reading in flexible groups
- Word study in guided reading groups
- Self-selected extended reading and writing
- Comprehension strategy instruction

These practices are not only useful for students with identified learning disabilities (Morris et al., 1996) or generalized difficulties with literacy learning (Lee & Neal, 1993; Tancock, 1994). The framework practices are capable of being modified for any level of reading proficiency, and they are likely to be helpful in the continued literacy growth of proficient readers as well (Morris et al.).

Attending to Critical Issues in Literacy

Critical literacy development has been described as “crucial to an understanding of successful reading in our culture” (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p. 14), and there has been some criticism of past balanced literacy approaches as not being inclusive of critical literacy perspectives (Moore, 1997). However, taking a pragmatic approach to designing a middle school literacy framework allows the combination of ideas that might previously have been seen as at odds. To illustrate, Freebody and Luke (1990), both proponents of critical literacy, have argued that there are four essential but not sufficient aspects of reading: code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst. Like balanced reading instruction, Freebody and Luke’s (1990) and later Luke’s (1995) recommendations for literacy instruction in “new times” suggest that students must be able to break the code of reading in order to understand, but instruction should never be limited to code breaking. Literacy instruction should also include instructing meaning making (acting as a text participant), setting purposes for reading (acting as a text user), and analyzing the way the text positions readers (acting as a text analyst).

When planning for instruction, the pragmatic framework suggests that teachers consider not only the classroom practices they are using, but also how those classroom practices address the necessary but not sufficient components of literacy instruction. For example, a teacher planning a lesson for daily oral or shared reading could focus on the use of Karaoke Club in 10- to 20-minute segments daily (Ash & Hagood, 2000). Karaoke Club, modeled on Poetry Club (Optiz & Rasinski, 1998), is a five-step instructional activity that focuses on students’ fluency development. Students engage in peer repeated readings of self-selected popular music lyrics and then perform them in a Karaoke style. Following these performances, students discuss the meaning of the lyrics as well as issues such as the portrayal of gender or racial stereotypes or how the music positions them as listeners. Table 2 details how the Karaoke Club addresses each of the critical components of literacy instruction and gives a brief description of each of the four roles of a literacy learner.

Table 2
Critical Competencies and Roles

Role (Freebody & Luke, 1990)	Critical Competency (Freebody & Luke, 1990)	Karaoke Club (Ash & Hagood, 2000)
Code breaker	Cracking the code of the text	Repeated readings support fluency development.
Text participant	Figuring out what the text means to them in current contexts	Students self-select songs with lyrics that they are interested in studying relying on their multiliteracies. These are texts they want to make meaning with and a format within which many are proficient meaning makers.
Text user	Deciding the purpose for the text and the reading	Performance provides the students real-life impetus for their repeated reading practice and meaning making.
Text analyst	Analyzing what assumptions the text makes about them as readers and what assumptions they make about the text, its meaning, and its place in society	Students can investigate song lyrics for issues of gender and age bias. Students can examine their own gendering of songs and artists. Investigations into the recording industry could provide information for discussions on the economics of popular culture and the mass media.

Although Freebody and Luke's (1990) theories have been considered in some writings on literacy instruction, most discussions focus on the first three components: code breaker, text participant, and text user. Additionally, I believe that some interpretations of the role of text analyst disregard much of the critical context of this component. For example, [Allen's \(2000\)](#) description of the text analyst does not discuss issues of ideology or social critique, issues intimately associated with the role in Freebody and Luke's work. It is my interpretation that text analyst takes students beyond being a text critic in the classical sense—that is, critiquing a text. The role of text analyst asks students to critique the text, the author within the society that produced the text, as well as the text's effect on the reader. It is essential, in this pragmatic framework, that the students' roles as text analysts are as valued as the other roles. Readers who struggle often encounter instruction that stalls in the "skill and drill" phase, and these students are not given opportunities to be critics of their reading or society's expectations for their reading ([Allington, 1991](#)).

Using the Framework as an Informed Decision Maker

Using the framework, teachers can combine modifications of traditional tutoring practices with more critical perspectives on literacy. The word *framework* has been chosen to describe this design because, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, it is "a structure composed of parts framed together, especially one designed for inclosing or supporting anything." This pragmatic framework is designed to support the literacy development of middle school readers and the instructional planning of language arts teachers.

I also chose the word because a framework provides an opportunity to view "teachers as informed decision makers" ([Speigel, 1998](#), p. 121). As informed decision makers, teachers shape their balanced literacy instruction based on what they understand from research, their students, and their experience, combining their personal, professional, and practical knowledge ([McNiff, 1993](#)). A framework serves as a scaffold, a planning document, a way for teachers to apply their own personal, professional, and practical knowledge to the observed needs of their students. The strength of the framework is that teachers can adapt it—in time distribution and actual classroom activities—to their students' needs and their curricular requirements.

In order to help teachers in their role as informed decision makers, this section describes examples of varied instructional activities that could fit into the framework (see Table 3). The instructional activities presented here are by no means all of the possibilities for instruction within the framework. However, suggested activities, supported by classroom research, are shared, and references that will provide more information about these instructional activities are offered as a support for teachers' developing professional knowledge.

Table 3
The Framework with Examples of Instructional Activities

The Framework of Classroom Practices	Examples of Instructional Activities
Daily oral or shared reading	Choral reading, Readers' Theatre, teacher read-aloud, repeated readings, taped read-alongs
Guided reading in flexible groups	Book club, literacy study circles, guided reading
Word study in guided reading groups	Word sorts, making big words, mystery word match, constructing and deconstructing words
Self-selected extended reading and writing	SSR/SSW, reading/writing workshop, discussion partners, dialogue journals
Comprehension strategy instruction	Reciprocal teaching, making connections, formulating questions

Daily oral or shared reading. Reading along with taped chapters, giving a planned reading performance, rereading familiar material at the beginning of the tutoring session, and engaging in teacher read-alouds--all of these practices have been demonstrated to improve students' fluency and confidence in their reading ([Dowhower, 1989, 1994](#)). Teacher read-alouds provide modeling for prosody, parsing, and pronunciation, aiding students' conceptions of fluent oral reading. Unfortunately, the practice of reading aloud to students decreases as students reach upper elementary and middle school ([Hoffman, Roser, & Battle, 1993](#)). Teachers could plan daily time for reading aloud and include all genres in their read-aloud program including informational texts, poetry, and picture books, as well as novels (Hoffman et al., 1993; Ivey & Broadus, 2000). [Worthy \(2000\)](#) found that middle students overwhelmingly suggested that more teacher read-alouds would improve their classroom reading instruction.

Students could also be given the opportunity for sharing their oral reading practice in class, but the key word here is practice. Part of what is so debilitating for struggling readers in round-robin reading (where students take turns reading short passages of a text) is that they are given no chance for rehearsal. Practice for performance gives students opportunities to reread their texts, leading to increased fluency and decreased miscues through repeated readings (Dowhower, 1989, 1994). Further, a classroom where students and teachers commonly share texts enables oral reading practice in a supportive environment, which is important for students' growing confidence in their competence as readers. Book shares by students allow them to be the experts, sharing their expertise and interests with others, connecting themselves to the control of the classroom, and allowing their own personal self-expression, all of which are motivating experiences ([Oldfather, 1993, 1995](#)).

Choral reading, or the practice of students reading a short narrative, expository, or poetic text together, has also been noted as especially effective in aiding the reading and language development of students who are English language learners ([McCauley & McCauley, 1992](#)). Readers Theatre performances of texts, which can include portions of the text read chorally, as well as students reading individually rehearsed parts, also gives students the opportunity for practice with a purpose ([Bidwell, 1990](#); [Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998/1999](#)). The support of other voices in choral reading and Readers Theatre also increases confidence in students who might not have the proficiency to read a text alone. These practices are grounded in a long line of research concerning live and taped read-along practices begun by [Heckelman \(1966, 1969\)](#) and [Chomsky \(1978\)](#), which has supported these techniques for improved fluency, speed, and accuracy.

Student-centered oral reading activities provide students with a real purpose for reading text on their instructional reading level and allow repeated practice with a familiar text; however, these oral reading activities are only a few of those that might be incorporated into middle school classrooms. Other oral reading activities to aid the development of fluency and comprehension, to support struggling readers, to perform, and to assess students are all discussed in *Good-bye Round Robin* (Opitz & Rasinski, 1998). This recent book includes examples of practices, suggested books, and insights from elementary and middle school classrooms where these practices have been implemented.

Teacher- and peer-led guided reading in flexible groups. Guided reading occurs in small groups that the teacher works with individually over the course of the week. The teacher introduces the books and assists the reading in ways that help students develop independent reading strategies (these strategies will be further discussed in the comprehension strategy instruction section). An important part of guided reading is that each child reads the entire text; rather than using round-robin reading, teachers use choral, partner, or silent reading. The goal of guided reading is for children to read independently and silently, and the emphasis is reading increasingly challenging books over time. Guided reading has been used extensively in elementary classrooms ([Fountas & Pinnell, 1996](#)) and can be adapted for middle school classrooms as well.

Guided reading is usually organized in flexible groups created by students' current reading performance. Children in each group are similar in their development of the reading process (able to read about the same level of text) and are grouped and regrouped in a dynamic process that involves ongoing observation and assessment. However, guided reading does not have to occur only in groups of similar ability levels. Students can also engage in group practice that is organized around their interests or their book choice ([Flood, Lapp, Flood, & Nagel, 1992](#)). Probably the best way to use guided reading effectively, allowing students exposure to students of all literacy levels with similar interests, as well as students of similar literacy levels with varying interests, would be to use an alternating teacher-led/student-selected instructional pattern ([Lewin, 1992](#)). Teachers could work with groups based on reading proficiency, alternating with student-selected cooperative groups based on interest.

Book Club ([McMahon, Raphael, Goatley, & Pardo, 1997](#); [Raphael & McMahon, 1994](#); [Raphael, Kehus, & Damphouse, 2001](#)) is an example of one possible organizational strategy for guided reading in middle school. Book Club emphasizes social construction of meaning and metacognitive strategies while reading, as well as allowing students the opportunity for self-expression in small group and whole class contexts, all noted as important aspects of a classroom focusing on competence. Book Club and the similar instructional activity of Literature Circles ([Daniels, 1994](#)) can allow different groups of students to read varying books on individual or class-wide topics or themes (examples of text sets that might be of high interest in the middle school classroom and appeal to readers of all literacy experience appear in Table 4). In literature circles, student groups are given a selection of books with a range of instructional reading levels and are allowed to select the book they would like to read. This ability to choose books from a set has been identified by “renegade readers” as essential to their participation in classroom reading ([Worthy, 1998](#)).

Table 4
Examples of Text Sets for the Middle Level With Shared Topics or Themes

<p>School Trouble</p> <p><i>Bad Girls</i> (Voigt) RL 5.5¹ <i>Frindle</i> (Clements) RL 4.8 <i>Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key</i> (Gantos) RL 5.2 <i>Nothing But the Truth</i> (Avi) RL 6.9 <i>There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom</i> (Sachar) RL 5.0</p>
<p>New and Different Worlds</p> <p><i>The Ear, the Eye, and the Arm</i> (Farmer) RL YA² <i>Ella Enchanted</i> (Levine) RL 4.2 <i>The Giver</i> (Lowry) RL YA <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i> (Rowling) RL 5.3 <i>A Time Apart</i> (Stanley) RL 6.3</p>
<p>Growing Up, Now and Then</p> <p><i>Guests</i> (Dorris) RL 5.6 <i>Our Only May Amelia</i> (Holm) RL 6.5 <i>Pacific Crossing</i> (Soto) RL 5.8 <i>Ties That Bind, Ties That Break</i> (Namioka) RL YA <i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963</i> (Curtis) RL 5.0</p>
<p>Breaking the Silence</p> <p><i>Don't You Dare Read This, Mrs. Dumphrey</i> (Haddix) RL 6.2 <i>Hannah in Between</i> (Rodowsky) RL 6.0 <i>Iceman</i> (Lynch) RL 5.2 <i>So Much to Tell You</i> (Marsden) RL 7.2 <i>Tangerine</i> (Bloor) RL YA</p>
<p>Violence and Responsibility</p> <p><i>Give a Boy a Gun</i> (Strasser) RL 6.4 <i>Making Up Megaboy</i> (Walter) RL 6.9 <i>Monster</i> (W.D. Myers) RL YA <i>Swallowing Stones</i> (McDonald) RL YA <i>When the Bough Breaks</i> (A. Myers) RL 6.2</p>

Fitting In*Like Sisters on the Homefront* (Williams-Garcia) RL 5.8³*My Own Worst Enemy* (Sonenklar) RL 4.2*The Skin I'm In* (Flake) RL 6.0*Stargirl* (Spinelli) RL 6.1*Wringer* (Spinelli) RL 5.5¹ Reading levels are taken from [Follett Library Resources](#). All books are appropriate in interest levels for Grades 6-8.² YA=Grades 7-12³ Includes mature subject matter regarding sexuality

In Book Club and Literature Circles, the teacher and the students set the purpose for the reading prior to each new selection. Students read at home and in class. While reading, they take notes on Post-it notes, in learning logs, on activity sheets, or on specially constructed bookmarks. In class, they discuss their selected topics and, with the teacher, design a writing or extension activity related to questions that they have about the text. Groups share their texts and their discussions in a classwide community share. In planning for classroom management of varied groups reading varied texts, a Book Club group could meet at least once a week with the teacher for a comprehension strategy lesson and a teacher-led discussion of their reading and at least once a week in a peer-led discussion, focusing on the importance of making meaning cooperatively ([Leal, 1993](#)).

Word study in guided reading groups. Word study supplements the comprehension focus of guided reading with intensive study of word identification strategies, vocabulary, and spelling either related to students' word development level or on multiple levels of instruction. Word study involves components of comparison, contrast, and analogy for teaching everything from basic phonics (e.g., initial consonants) to complicated multisyllabic spelling patterns related to words' meaning (e.g., noting that there is a silent *g* in *sign* because it is semantically related to words like signal and signature) ([Bear & Templeton, 1998](#); [Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2000](#); [Cunningham, 1978, 1979, 1980](#)). These strategies are introduced within the context of words that students encounter in their daily reading and writing, and spelling and decoding patterns they "use but confuse" (Bear et al., 2000). This use of contextualized word study helped all students develop greater proficiency in identifying, pronouncing, and comprehending unfamiliar words in their reading and spelling words in their writing

In the *Words Their Way* developmental word study program detailed by Bear et al. (2000), students are given a brief spelling test that determines their level of orthographic knowledge. Assessments of orthographic knowledge, which are ongoing both formally through spelling assessments and informally through analysis of the students' everyday writing and spelling, can provide the basis for the guided reading groups which are formed according to students' literacy experience. After completing the guided reading and discussion in these groups, teachers may select a few vocabulary words from each guided reading selection related to a spelling/reading pattern, which the students "use but confuse" for instruction. Students, for example, who are less experienced with spelling might be working on word patterns including the long vowel sound coupled with a silent *e* (CVCe). Students with greater experience with orthographic patterns might be sorting words according to semantic features such as shared Latin or Greek roots (e.g., words including the *dic* root meaning to say). Students are continually assessed for progress through the flexible groups, and progress according to their, not the group's, developing proficiencies.

In addition to developmental word study, other researchers detail the application of multi-levelled instruction in spelling and word identification. In *Phonics They Use*, [Cunningham \(2000\)](#) outlines word identification activities appropriate for students just beginning to find patterns in words and for more experienced readers who are looking for strategies for decoding multisyllabic words; these activities can cover the varied levels of literacy proficiency in a middle school language arts classroom. Through direct modeling, word games, and morphemic and semantic analysis, students are able to apply the knowledge they have about words in order to read and understand new words. Further Making Words/Making Big Words (the take words apart and put them back together activity) allows students to study word families and spelling in a self-checking, supportive environment (for extensive multi-level strategies see [Cunningham, 2000](#); [Cunningham & Cunningham, 1992](#); [Cunningham &](#)

[Hall, 1994](#)). A modification of this activity, Making and Writing Words ([Rasinski, 1999](#); [online document](#)), would also be effective with these older students.

Teacher-directed word study for students in middle school, even if they are struggling, can last 5-15 minutes to introduce a new concept and then be practiced independently or collaboratively with peers during self-selected reading and writing time. Word study within the context of students' reading and writing is more useful to their literacy development than isolated vocabulary and spelling study and is better integrated into students' word identification and spelling strategies; these contextualized strategies have been successful in helping students become more proficient readers, writers, and spellers (Cunningham, Hall, & Defee, 1991). This success has led many researchers, most vocally Ivey (Ivey, 1999a, 1999b; Ivey & Broaddus, 2000), to call for the inclusion of word study in middle school curricula.

Self-selected extended reading and writing. Self-selected reading and writing provides students choice over their reading and writing, control over their goals and responses, and opportunities to collaborate with other students. Additionally, extended silent reading of self-selected text provides students with opportunities to try out comprehension, self-monitoring, and word identification strategies they are learning as a part of classroom instruction, helping them to construct meaning actively as they read ([Swift, 1993](#)). Independent silent reading plays a significant role in the reading or literacy workshop, as does independent or collaborative writing (Atwell, 1998; Rief, 1992; Swift, 1993).

Self-selected reading and writing also allows children to read books that are more difficult than their independent reading levels because they are interested in reading them. But students should also have a chance to read easy texts; Ivey (1999a) has noted that they should be available for students who wish to practice with an old favorite or to read with greater fluency. As part of this accessibility, it has been demonstrated that a well-organized, extensive classroom library including all genres of literature, as well as magazines, comic books, picture books, and other interesting reading material, is very important in maintaining students' motivation and interest in an extended silent reading program ([Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, & Teale, 1993](#); [Worthy, 1996](#), 1998, 2000).

Students should also be allowed to read with peers and to communicate with them about the self-selected texts that they have chosen (Worthy, 1998). Opportunities for partner reading can encourage peer tutoring and co-constructions of meanings while reading texts as well as providing motivation for continued reading ([Mathes & Fuchs, 1993](#)). Dialogue journals, a common communication device in literacy workshops, can serve to encourage students to write to their teacher, as well as their peers, about their reading (Atwell, 1998; Swift, 1993). Likewise, students can use a variety of writing activities to respond to their reading, including writing book reviews and critiques for other students to use to select books, providing them a real audience for their writing (Atwell, 1998).

Middle school students need extensive time set aside for them to read and respond to texts that they choose to read (Ivey, 1999a, 1999b; Worthy, 2000). This silent reading provides extended practice for students, practice that they themselves note as being an important part of their improvement as readers ([Stewart, Paradiz, Ross, & Lewis, 1996](#)). Struggling readers in Stewart et al.'s study indicate quite clearly that if teachers would like readers to develop proficiency and fluency, "Give us time to read and let us pick other books" (p. 474).

Comprehension strategy instruction. Direct and explicit modeling of strategy use and the support for the application of strategies during guided and independent reading provide tools for students to help make themselves more proficient readers and take control of their role in the reading process. Comprehension strategy instruction that focuses on strategies for students to activate their prior knowledge, to maintain and to monitor their attention and comprehension during reading, and to synthesize what they have learned after reading has been proven to be effective for middle school students, especially those for whom reading is difficult ([Flood & Lapp, 1990](#)). These practices, which mirror what good readers do during reading, help students integrate their strategy knowledge into reading as a thought process ([Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992](#)).

Strategic learning in students develops along three levels: declarative knowledge (being able to describe a strategy), procedural knowledge (being able to use a strategy on demand), and conditional knowledge (being

able to select and to apply a strategy as appropriate) (Garner, 1990). Comprehension strategy instruction should focus on providing teacher-directed strategies, like discussion Webs (Alvermann, 1991, adapted from Duthie, 1986), as well as self-directed strategies such as questioning, to describe explicitly, to model, and to guide strategy use.

One such strategy is Reciprocal Teaching Plus, which I recently developed based on the Reciprocal Teaching activity (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Reciprocal Teaching is a strategy that focuses students on four aspects of their reading: making and revising predictions, asking questions, clarifying difficult points and vocabulary, and summarizing the material. In the beginning, the teacher models Reciprocal Teaching with the students, demonstrating how to use the four parts of the strategy, eventually moving students toward using the strategy in peer-led small groups or pairs. My adaptation takes this very effective strategy and incorporates critical literacy perspectives. In addition to the four elements, Reciprocal Teaching Plus asks students to address a fifth element, to evaluate a text critically, identifying the author's perspective and analyzing what points of view are left out of the current text. Prompts that teachers can use to help students with the fifth element—analyzing the perspective of the author and text—include:

- Identify the perspective(s) of the author (Whose story is being told?)
- Evaluate the author's identification of his/her own perspective (Is the author consciously representing a particular world view? Is this disclosed openly to the reader?)
- Describe what other perspectives there might be on this text (Whose story is not being told? Why?)

Reciprocal Teaching Plus models how students can be text participants, text users, and text analysts simultaneously (Freebody & Luke, 1990).

In addition to helping with developing comprehension strategies with literary texts, middle school students can also benefit from content area strategy instruction. Content area literacy skills are most effective when taught within the content area courses themselves, but they can be taught effectively within a reading class. This action is often necessary because of the reluctance of content area teachers to include literacy instruction in their classes (O'Brien, Stewart, Moje, 1995) and the difficulty of content area textbooks, particularly for students who struggle with reading. Many strategies, such as Reciprocal Teaching Plus, are effective with both narrative and expository texts. Between books in guided reading, perhaps in one-week blocks of time, whole class and small group instruction in comprehension strategies for the content areas could be considered in the framework. This instruction could use the students' content area textbooks as well as their actual reading assignments and could provide students with strategies they can use in their reading in language arts as well as their other content areas. As part of an integrated unit on a middle school team, connecting the textual reading in science or social studies to the strategy instruction in reading and language arts, or as part of a guided reading groups, multiple exposures to varied strategies can improve independent strategy use (Garner, 1990).

An excellent description of possible procedures for strategy instruction is provided in *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding* (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). This recently published book also includes sample lessons for introducing comprehension strategies on varied grade levels. Other sources for comprehension strategy instruction include *I Read It, But I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers* (Tovani, 2000), and *Strategic Reading: Guiding Students to Lifelong Literacy, 6-12* (Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube, 2001). Strategy instruction grounded in students' actual texts and assignments provides the best opportunities for students to use strategies to accomplish authentic tasks. In fact, Roe (1992) argues that it is essential that instruction in comprehension strategies be taught using the actual materials with which students will be asked to use the strategies. With opportunities to practice these strategies and apply them in actual classroom situations, students are more likely to internalize strategies and use them appropriately on their road to becoming expert readers (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996; Pearson et al., 1992).

[Back to menu](#)

Planning for Instruction Using the Framework

This section provides the reader entry into a classroom using the framework, demonstrating how these parts might fit together into a whole. The classroom described is an amalgam of organizations of actual classrooms in Georgia and Delaware, a hypothetical example of the framework at work. It should be noted that this is only a single example of what teacher planning could look like. It is not meant as a scripted program that must be followed to the letter, but rather as a way of emphasizing particular instructional practices in planning.

In this example, the teacher has chosen Poetry Club as the daily oral and shared reading activity and Book Clubs as a peer-led guided reading activity (see Table 5 for an example of her planning guide). This Book Club, she has decided, will be teacher-directed; she has selected a group of texts that share the subject of “School Trouble.” The texts are on a variety of reading levels, but all are of interest to sixth grade students. When the students select their text, she is going to encourage them to use the five finger rule to select a book that is on their instructional reading level. As the groups will then be roughly organized on shared orthographic levels, she has selected word sorting for students’ orthographic development levels as the word study activity. The books are all set at school, an environment her students have experience with, so she decides that an appropriate comprehension strategy to focus on in her teacher-led guided reading lesson will be making connections. As she is comfortable with some of her students working in a less structured environment, the students not meeting with their groups will engage in reading/writing workshop for self-selected extended reading and writing. Finally, she has included a Book Club Community Share to draw together her students’ different texts and to review the comprehension strategy lesson. In her focus on the Book Club instruction, the teacher has also attended to the critical components of literacy instruction identified by Luke and Freebody (1990). How her instruction will attend to all four components is described in Table 6.

Table 5
An Example of a Teacher’s Informed Decision Making Using the Framework

The Framework of Classroom Practices	Selected Instructional Activities
Daily oral or shared reading	Poetry club
Guided reading in flexible groups	Book club Teacher guided reading instruction <u>Subject - School Trouble</u> <i>Bad Girls</i> (Voigt) <i>Frindle</i> (Clements) <i>Joey Pigzka Swallowed the Key</i> (Gantos) <i>Nothing But the Truth</i> (Avi) <i>There’s a Boy in the Girl’s Bathroom</i> (Sachar)
Word study in guided reading groups	Developmental word sorts
Self-selected extended reading and writing	SSR/SSW
Comprehension strategy instruction	Making connections

Table 6
Example of the Incorporation of Critical Literacy Instruction Into the Framework

Role (Freebody & Luke, 1990)	Critical Competency (Freebody & Luke, 1990)	Thematic Guided Reading Instruction "School Trouble"
Code breaker	Cracking the code of the text	Teacher instruction/student practice in strategies for word identification and vocabulary.
Text participant	Figuring out what the text means to them in current contexts	Books read share high-interest topics and themes with connections to students' multiliteracies. Students are able to bring their strengths from other literacy areas (such as visual media) to their reading.
Text user	Deciding the purpose for the text and the reading	Students and teacher share the responsibility for the focus and direction of discussions and assignments.
Text analyst	Analyzing what assumptions the text makes about them as readers and what assumptions they make about the text, its meaning, and its place in society	Students can investigate the portrayal of teachers as being generally one-sided, either a friend to the students or an enemy. They could investigate how do the texts position them as young adolescents. What are the assumptions being made about the relationships they have with their teachers? What are adults' expectations of their relationships with teachers? How is this portrayal related to the economics of the publishing industry and the fact that adults write children's and YA novels? Would adolescents portray their own relationships with teachers in this way? How/why might their perspectives differ?

Once the teacher has chosen what activities she will use within the framework and how her instruction satisfies the students' critical literacy needs, she looks at her limited time per class (50 minutes) and decides how much time should be allotted for each activity. Although the performance for the poetry club is coming up, most of her students should be able to read their poetry fluently with 5 minutes practice a day for the week, so she budgets 10 minutes a day, as they are working in partners. She knows that in her guided reading group meeting, she needs to give a 10 item spelling test, to teach her comprehension lesson on making connections, and to introduce 10 new words to the group. She has also found that she needs to meet directly with each group at least once a week. Therefore she can allot 30 minutes for the group meetings and the SSR/SSW. That leaves 10 minutes for the community share at the end of class. Her time planning is demonstrated in Table 7.

Table 7
Example of Management of a Framework Classroom in a 50-minute period

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Daily oral or shared reading Poetry club (10 minutes)	All groups	All groups	All groups	All groups	All groups
Comprehension strategy instruction/thematic guided reading with teacher and word study Making connections (30 minutes)	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Peer guided reading and word study practice Book club (30 minutes)	Groups 2, 5	Groups 1, 3	Groups 2, 4	Groups 3, 5	Groups 1, 4
Self-selected extended Reading and writing SSR/SSW (30 Minutes)	Groups 3, 4	Groups 4, 5	Groups 1, 5	Groups 1, 2	Groups 2, 3
Revisit guided Reading and comprehension strategy instruction Book club Community share (10 minutes)	All groups	All groups	All groups	All groups	All groups

Looking Into a Framework Classroom

Daily oral and shared reading. On Tuesday, in this sixth-grade classroom, students begin their reading work the minute they enter. The students know that the first 10 minutes of class are reserved for oral reading. Today, as yesterday, the opening 10 minutes of class is reserved for poetry club practice (Opitz and Rasinski, 1998). Students get together with their self-selected partners and read to each other their self-selected poems. These poems, which will be performed the following week at the Poetry Club Coffee House, are read orally, with the

students' rehearsal focusing on rate, automaticity, and expression. Each student gets to read his or her poem at least two times, and follows along with and gives feedback to his or her partner's reading as well, before the teacher announces it is time to transition to group work.

Guided reading in peer-led groups. Members of Group 1, who are reading *Frindle* (Clements, 1998), met with the teacher yesterday, so they are meeting as a peer-directed group today. The first thing they do is get out their word sort cards and spend 5 to 10 minutes reviewing their word study lesson. Then they begin their assignment for their book club meeting. When meeting with the teacher yesterday, Group 1 decided that they would like to retell a chapter of *Frindle* from Mrs. Granger's, the teacher's, perspective because the book is told from the point of view of Nick, her student. With this assignment in mind, the students get out their reading logs, and discuss the reading they completed last night, focusing their discussion on what Mrs. Granger's perspective on the events might be.

Meanwhile, the members of Group 3 are preparing for their meeting with the teacher tomorrow to discuss their novel *Joey Pigzta Swallowed the Key* (Gantos, 1998). They are doing a final review of their word study words, knowing that tomorrow they will have their spelling application test. They are also debating on what they would like next week's assignment to be, before discussing the possibilities with their teacher. And finally, they are working together to complete last week's assignment, a list of ten recommendations from Joey to other students with ADHD about how they might become more successful in school.

Self-selected reading and writing. At the same time, members of Groups 4 and 5 are engaged in self-selected independent reading and writing. Some of the students are in the reading corner, lounging on the couch and in bean bags, reading *Teen People*, *Rock Rules: The Ultimate Rock Band Book* (Rosenthal, 2000), *Sports Illustrated*, and gaming magazines. Others are reading their novel for their Book Club Group, making notations on sticky notes as they read. Three students have signed up to practice their [word study lesson](#) on the computer and another pair of students are working together on their writing assignment for their Book Club book, *Nothing But the Truth* (Avi, 1991). A final pair of students are on the computer hooked up to the internet; they are researching how to bring an issue before the school board as part of their assignment to write a letter to the school board to ask them to rehire Carla, the counselor in *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom* (Sachar, 1987).

Guided reading in a teacher-led group. Simultaneously, Group 2 is meeting with the teacher today. Their session begins with a spelling test that is unlike ordinary spelling tests. Rather than being tested over the words they have spent a week studying, they are taking a test over words like the words they have learned. So, for example, although they studied opposition, composition is the word on their test. Following the brief spelling test, the teacher collects their papers and asks them to remind her what has happened in the story so far. The students give a brief retelling, and then the teacher asks them to share from their reading logs. In their logs they have recorded various text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997) in their reading of *Bad Girls* (Voigt, 1996). These connections have been the focus of the teachers' strategy instruction in all of the groups. Following the sharing of the reading logs, the teacher asks them why it is important to make these connections while reading, and a student explains that these thought processes are the kinds of things that good readers do while reading.

In preparation for their next reading assignment, the teacher asks the students what good readers do before they read. The students suggest that they make predictions about what might happen, and so the teacher encourages them to make predictions about what might happen in the next chapter. They record these predictions in their learning logs. The students then discuss with the teacher what they would like their assignment to be for the next week, setting their purpose for reading, and guiding their during and after reading reflection. They decide that they would like to write a description of a time that they were either bullied or bullied someone else. Then they would write about what they thought Mikey or Margalo (the main characters) would do if in their situation. The teacher points out to them that in this assignment they will be making text-to-self connections. After discussing their writing assignment, the teacher briefly introduces ten new words for word sorting, building on the students' lesson last week. At this, her 30 minutes are up, and she announces to the class the beginning of the transition to community share.

Community share. For community share today, the teacher has decided to focus on the portrayal of teachers in the five books the students are reading for Book Club. As all of the books focus on young adolescents who

often get in trouble in school, the students have often commented in their individual group meetings about the ways that the teachers are portrayed in their books. She wants them to share this information across texts so that the students can look for similarities and differences in the portrayals, and reflect on why teachers might be portrayed in these ways. She gives each group a sheet of chart paper, and asks them to write down the teachers' names from their books and then describe them. The groups then share their descriptions, and the charts are posted on the board. The students note that most teachers are portrayed as simply good or bad, but that the teacher in *Frindle*, Mrs. Granger, seems to have both good and bad aspects. The students also note that bad teachers are usually balanced with good teachers, so that the students in the books do not have only bad teachers. As time is quickly coming to a close, the teacher asks the students to think about if the teachers in the books are described differently because adults are writing the books, rather than adolescents. She indicates that they will address this issue in community share tomorrow, and then asks the students to collect their things and get ready to go. The bell rings, the students leave, and a new group shuffles in and begins to practice their poems for Poetry Club.

Making the Framework a Reality

By reviewing the challenges that students who struggle with reading face in middle level classrooms, synthesizing successful tutoring programs for these readers, integrating suggestions for critical literacy instruction, and recommending modifications of these practices for classroom-based instruction, I have attempted to provide a framework for what balanced reading instruction for students of multiple levels of literacy experience might look like in a middle school language arts classroom.

The practices discussed in this framework are not new; in fact in their survey of literacy professionals, [Commeyras and DeGroff \(1998\)](#) noted that over 63 percent of middle school teachers reported having used Book Clubs in their classrooms (p. 450). Free choice reading and literacy workshops are also a part of many classrooms. Using a pragmatic synthesis, I have suggested a possible framework for organizing instruction so that students can receive literacy instruction in a systematic way, but a way based on the students and their needs, not a predetermined instructional sequence applied homogeneously to a heterogeneous class of students. Teachers, as informed decision makers, can create their own instructional activities and time distributions that work for them and their students.

In order for teachers to feel comfortable with their role as informed decision makers, it might be necessary to provide teachers in middle schools opportunities to examine their reading nightmares ([Bintz, 1997](#)) and to engage in inservice development opportunities to address the concerns they have in providing instruction for students on all levels of literacy experience. Inservice programs developed on need-based criteria established by the teachers themselves might help teachers become more comfortable in this role.

Schools also need to be aware that text availability, in a variety of genres and on a variety of reading levels, is essential to meeting students' varied needs. When schools or districts select a single text for language arts instruction, it can be interpreted as an assumption that all students have the same needs and interests, and that teachers should engage in whole class instruction regardless of individual student needs (Ash, 2000). Funding for textual material should consider varied classroom libraries, something students are less likely to have access to when they enter middle school classrooms (Fractor et al., 1993; Worthy, 1996, 1998, 2000).

Additionally, institutes of higher education should consider the needs of all middle school readers in preparing preservice teachers for middle school reading, language arts, and English classrooms. In the United States, for example, it is unlikely that middle school language arts teachers have been educated about teaching struggling readers in their classrooms; only ten states require a developmental reading class of their middle school teacher certification candidates ([Romine, McKenna, & Robinson, 1996](#)). Teacher educators cannot forget that not all middle school students already know how to read proficiently, and instructors can provide classroom instruction and field-based experiences to help preservice teachers become prepared to teach reading to all students in the middle grades.

This article does not suggest that middle school students should not continue to receive additional reading instruction outside of the regular classroom when it is available, nor does it argue that a classroom teacher can

replace a specialist specifically trained to meet a student's needs. It does argue, however, that the reading instruction offered as a part of middle school language arts instruction can focus on readers' needs, and regular classroom teachers can provide instruction that helps support the literacy growth of readers who struggle. Using this pragmatic framework, teachers and researchers working together might be able to create and to describe varied learning environments within which all middle school students will become more proficient readers.

References

- Allen, J. (2000). *Yellow brick roads: Shared and guided paths to independent reading, 4-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
[Back](#)
- Allington, R. (1983). Fluency: The neglected reading goal. *The Reading Teacher*, 36(6), 556-561.
[Back](#)
- Allington, R. (1991). The legacy of "slow it down and make it more concrete." In J. Zuttell & S. McCormick (Eds.), *Learner factors/ teacher factors: Issues in literacy research and instruction* (40th yearbook of the National Reading Conference, pp. 19-29). Chicago: National Reading Conference.
[Back](#)
- Alvermann, D.E. (1991). The discussion web: A graphic aid for learning across the curriculum. *The Reading Teacher*, 45(2), 92-99.
[Back](#)
- Ash, G.E. (2000). Middle school literacy teachers' ethical stances and role perceptions. (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Georgia, Athens, 2000). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61(08), 3105.
[Back](#)
- Ash, G.E., & Hagood, M.C. (2000, May). Improving struggling readers' oral reading fluency, meaning making, and motivation through karaoke. "This next song goes out to Miss Margaret and Miss Gwynne!": *Creating a Karaoke Club at your school*. Session presented at the annual meeting of the International Reading Association, Indianapolis, IN
[Back](#)
- Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
[Back](#)
- Bear, D.R., & Templeton, S. (1998). Explorations in developmental spelling: Foundations for learning and teaching phonics, spelling, and vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher*, 52(3), 222-242.
[Back](#)
- Bear, D.R., Invernizzi, M. Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2000). *Words their way: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
[Back](#)
- Bidwell, S.M. (1990). Using drama to increase motivation, comprehension, and fluency. *Journal of Reading*, 34(1), 38-41.
[Back](#)
- Bintz, W.P. (1997). Exploring the reading nightmares of middle and secondary school teachers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 41(1), 12-24.
[Back](#)

Chomsky, C. (1978). When you still can't read in third grade: After decoding, what? In S.J. Samuels (Ed.), *What research has to say about reading instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

[Back](#)

Commeyras, M., & DeGross, L. (1998). Literacy professionals' perspectives on professional development and pedagogy: A United States survey. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33(4), 434-472.

[Back](#)

Cunningham, P.M. (1978). Decoding polysyllabic words: An alternative strategy. *Journal of Reading*, 21 (7), 608-614.

[Back](#)

Cunningham, P.M. (1979). A compare/contrast theory of mediated word identification. *The Reading Teacher*, 32(7), 774-778.

[Back](#)

Cunningham, P.M. (1980). Applying a compare/contrast process to identifying polysyllabic words. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 12(3), 213-223.

[Back](#)

Cunningham, P.M. (2000). *Phonics they use: Words for reading and writing* (3rd ed.). New York: Harper Collins.

[Back](#)

Cunningham, P.M., & Cunningham, J.W. (1992). Making words: Enhancing the invented spelling-decoding connection. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(2), 106-107

[Back](#)

Cunningham, P.M., & Hall, D.P. (1994). *Making Big Words: Multilevel, hands-on spelling and phonics activities*. Torrance, CA: Good Apple.

[Back](#)

Cunningham, P.M., Hall, D.P., & Defee, M. (1991). Nonability-grouped, multilevel instruction: A year in a first-grade classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 44(8), 566-571.

[Back](#)

Daniels, H. (1994). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in the student-centered classroom*. York, ME: Stenhouse

[Back](#)

Dillon, D.R., O'Brien, D.G., & Heilman, E.E. (2000). Literacy research in the next millennium: From paradigms to pragmatism and practicality. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(1), 10-26.

[Back](#)

Dole, J.A., Brown, K.J., & Trathen, W. (1996). The effects of strategy instruction on the comprehension performance of at-risk students. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 31(1), 62-88.

[Back](#)

Dowhower, S.L. (1989). Repeated reading: Research into practice. *The Reading Teacher*, 42(7), 502-507.

[Back](#)

Dowhower, S.L. (1994). Repeated reading revisited: Research into practice. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 10, 343-358.

[Back](#)

Duthie, J. (1986). The web: A powerful tool for the teaching and evaluation of the expository essay. *The History and Social Science Teacher*, 21, 232-236.

[Back](#)

Flood, J., & Lapp, D. (1990). Reading comprehension instruction for at-risk students: Research-based practices that can make a difference. *Journal of Reading*, 33(7), 490-496.

[Back](#)

Flood, J., Lapp, D., Flood, S., & Nagel, G. (1992). Am I allowed to group? Using flexible patterns for effective instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 45(8), 608-616.

[Back](#)

Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. (1996) *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

[Back](#)

Fractor, J.S., Woodruff, M.C., Martinez, M.G., & Teale, W.H. (1993). Let's not miss opportunities to promote voluntary reading: Classroom libraries in the elementary school. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(6), 476-484.

[Back](#)

Freebody, P., & Luke, A. (1990). "Literacies" programs: Debates and demands in cultural context. Prospect: *The Australian Journal of TESOL*, 5(5), 7-16.

[Back](#)

Garner, R. (1990). When children and students do not use learning strategies: Toward a theory of settings. *Review of Educational Research*, 60, 517-529.

[Back](#)

Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

[Back](#)

Heckelman, R.G. (1966). Using the neurological impress remedial reading technique. *Academic Therapy*, 1, 235-239, 250.

[Back](#)

Heckelman, R.G. (1969). A neurological-impress method of remedial-reading instruction. *Academic Therapy*, 4, 277-282.

[Back](#)

Hoffman, J.V., Roser, N.L., & Battle, J. (1993). Reading aloud in classrooms: From the modal toward a "model". *The Reading Teacher*, 46(6), 496-503.

[Back](#)

Ivey, G. (1999a). Reflections on teaching struggling middle school readers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 42(5), 372-381.

[Back](#)

Ivey, G. (1999b). A multicase study in the middle school. Complexities among young adolescent readers.

Reading Research Quarterly, 34(2), 172-192.

[Back](#)

Ivey, G., & Broadus, K. (2000). Tailoring the fit: Reading instruction and middle school readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 54(1), 68-78.

[Back](#)

- Keene, E.O., & Zimmerman, S. (1997). *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
[Back](#)
- Kos, R. (1991). Persistence of reading disabilities: The voices of four middle school students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 28(4), 875-895.
[Back](#)
- Leal, D.J. (1993). The power of literary peer-group discussions: How children collaboratively negotiate meaning. *The Reading Teacher*, 47(2), 114-120.
[Back](#)
- Lee, N.G., & Neal, J.C. (1993). Reading Rescue: Intervention for a student "at promise". *Journal of Reading*, 36(4), 276-282.
[Back](#)
- Lewin, L. (1992). Integrating reading and writing strategies using an alternating teacher-led/student-selected instructional pattern. *The Reading Teacher*, 45(8), 586-591.
[Back](#)
- Luke, A. (1995). When basic skills and information processing just aren't enough: Rethinking reading in the new times. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 95-115.
[Back](#)
- Mathes, P.G., & Fuchs, L.S. (1993). Peer-mediated reading instruction in special education resource rooms. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 8(4), 233-243.
[Back](#)
- Martinez, M., Roser, N.L., & Strecker, S. (1998/1999). "I never thought I could be a star": A readers theatre ticket to fluency. *The Reading Teacher*, 52(4), 326-334.
[Back](#)
- McCauley, J.K., & McCauley, D.S. (1992). Using choral reading to promote language learning for ESL students. *The Reading Teacher*, 45(7), 526-533.
[Back](#)
- McMahon, S.I., Raphael, T.E., Goatley, V.J. & Pardo, L.S. (Eds.). (1997). *The Book Club connection: Literacy learning and classroom talk*. New York: Teachers College Press.
[Back](#)
- McNiff, J. (1993). *Teaching as learning: An action research approach*. New York: Routledge.
[Back](#)
- Moje, E.B., Young, J.P., Readence, J.E., & Moore, D.W. (2000). Reinventing adolescent literacy for new times: Perennial and millennial issues. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 43(5), 400-410.
[Back](#)
- Morris, D., Ervin, C., & Conrad, K. (1996). A case study of middle school reading disability. *The Reading Teacher*, 49(5), 368-377.
[Back](#)
- Moore, D.W. (1997). Questions of Balance. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32(2), 212-215.
[Back](#)

- Moore, D.W., Bean, T.W., Birdyshaw, D., & Rycik, J.A. (1999). Adolescent literacy: A position statement. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 43(1), 97-112.
[Back](#)
- National Association for Education Statistics. (1999). *The NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card*. Washington D. C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education.
[Back](#)
- O'Brien, D.G., Stewart, R.A., & Moje, E.B. (1995). Why content literacy is difficult to infuse into the secondary school: Complexities of curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30, 442-463.
[Back](#)
- Oldfather, P. (1993). What students say about motivating experiences in a whole language classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(8), 672-681.
[Back](#)
- Oldfather, P. (1995). Commentary: What's needed to maintain and extend motivation for literacy in the middle grades. *Journal of Reading*, 38(6), 420-422.
[Back](#)
- Opitz, M.F., & Rasinski, T.V. (1998). *Good-bye round robin: Twenty-five effective oral reading strategies*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
[Back](#)
- Palinscar, A.S., & Brown, A.L. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction*, 2, 117-175.
[Back](#)
- Pearson, P.D., Roehler, L.R. Dole, J.A., & Duffy, G.G. (1992). Developing expertise in reading comprehension. In S.J. Samuels & A.E. Farstrup (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (2nd ed., pp. 147-199). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
[Back](#)
- Raphael, T.E., Kehus, M., & Damphouse, K. (2001). *Book Club for middle school*. Lawrence, MA: Small Planet Communications.
[Back](#)
- Raphael, T.E., & McMahon, S. I. (1994). Book Club: An alternative framework for reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 48(2), 102-116.
[Back](#)
- Rasinski, T. (1999, February). Making and writing words: A variation on making words. *Reading Online*. Available: [http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=words/rasinski_index.html].
[Back](#)
- Rief, L. (1992). *Seeking diversity: Language arts with adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
[Back](#)
- Roe, M.F. (1992). Reading strategy instruction: Complexities and possibilities in middle school. *Journal of Reading*, 36(3), 190-196.
[Back](#)

Romine, B.G., McKenna, M.C., & Robinson, R.D. (1996). Reading coursework requirements for middle and high school content area teachers: A U. S. survey. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 40(3), 194-198.
[Back](#)

Santa, C.M. (1998). Adolescents: The forgotten faction. *Reading Today*, 15(5), 16.
[Back](#)

Spiegel, D.L. (1998). Silver bullets, babies, and bathwater: Literature response groups in a balanced literacy program. *The Reading Teacher*, 52(2), 114-124.
[Back](#)

Stewart, R.A., Paradis, E.E., Ross, B.D., & Lewis, M.J. (1996). Student voices: What works in literature-based developmental reading. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 39(6), 468-478.
[Back](#)

Swift, K. (1993). Try reading workshop in your classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(5), 366-371.
[Back](#)

Tancock, S.M. (1994). A literacy lesson framework for children with reading problems. *The Reading Teacher*, 48(2), 130-140.
[Back](#)

Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: Comprehension strategies and adolescent readers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
[Back](#)

Vacca, R.T. (1997). The benign neglect of adolescent literacy. *Reading Today*, 14(4), 3.
[Back](#)

Vacca, R.T. (1998). Let's not marginalize adolescent literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 41(8), 604-609.
[Back](#)

Wilhelm, J.D., Baker, T.N., & Dube, J. (2001). *Strategic reading: Guiding students to lifelong literacy, 6-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
[Back](#)

Worthy, J. (1996). Removing barriers to voluntary reading for reluctant readers: The role of school and classroom libraries. *Language Arts*, 73, 483-492.
[Back](#)

Worthy, J. (1998). "On every page someone gets killed!" Book conversations you don't hear at school. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 41(7), 508-517.
[Back](#)

Worthy, J. (2000). Teachers' and students' suggestions for motivating middle-school students to read. In T. Shanahan and F. V. Brown (Eds.), *The 49th Yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 441-451). Chicago: National Reading Conference.
[Back](#)

[Back to menu](#)

Children's and Young Adults' Literature

- Avi. (1991). *Nothing but the truth*. New York: Avon.
- Bloor, E. (1998). *Tangerine*. New York: Apple.
- Clements, A. (1998). *Frindle*. New York: Aladdin.
- Curtis, C.P. (1995). *The Watsons go to Birmingham – 1963*. New York: Scholastic.
- Dorris, M. (1994/1999). *Guests*. New York: Hyperion.
- Farmer, N. (1994). *The ear, the eye, and the arm*. New York: Scholastic.
- Flake, S.G. (1998). *The skin I'm in*. New York: Scholastic.
- Gantos, J. (1998). *Joey Pigzka swallowed the key*. New York: Harper Trophy.
- Haddix, M.P. (1996). *Don't you dare read this, Mrs. Dumphrey*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.
- Holm, J. (2001). *Our only May Amelia*. New York: Harper Trophy.
- Levine, G.C. (1997). *Ella enchanted*. New York: Scholastic.
- Lowry, L. (1993). *The giver*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell.
- Lynch, C. (1994). *Iceman*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Marsden, J. (1995). *So much to tell you*. New York: Fawcett Books.
- McDonald, J. (1999). *Swallowing stones*. New York: Laurel Leaf Books.
- Myers, A. (2000). *When the bough breaks*. New York: Walker and Company.
- Myers, W.D. (2000). *Monster*. New York: HaperCollins.
- Namioka, L. (1999). *Ties that bind, ties that break*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell.
- Rodowsky, C. (1994). *Hannah in between*. New York: Troll.
- Rosenthal, M. (2000). *Rock rules: The ultimate rock band book*. New York: Scholastic.
- Rowling, J.K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone*. New York: Scholastic.
- Sachar, L. (1987). *There's a boy in the girl's bathroom*. New York: Scholastic.
- Sonenklar, C. (1999). *My own worst enemy*. New York: Scholastic.
- Soto, G. (1992). *Pacific crossing*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Spinelli, J. (2000). *Stargirl*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Spinelli, J. (1997). *Wrinker*. New York: Scholastic.
- Stanley, D. (1999). *A time apart*. New York: Scholastic.
- Strasser, T. (2000). *Give a boy a gun*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.
- Voigt, C. (1996). *Bad girls*. New York: Scholastic.
- Walter, V. (1998). *Making up Megaboy*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Williams-Garcia, R. (1998). *Like sisters on the homefront*. New York: Puffin.

[Back to menu](#)

About the Author

Gwynne Ellen Ash is a former middle school reading and language arts teacher. She received her Ph.D. in reading education from the University of Georgia in 2000, and she is currently an assistant professor in the School of Education at the University of Delaware (Newark, DE, USA). Gwynne also directs the Delaware Reading Project, a professional development program based on the principles of the National Writing Project. In addition to teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in elementary and middle school literacy methods, her areas of research include middle school readers who struggle, teachers' perceptions of their roles, the use of children's literature in the middle school classroom, and comprehension strategy instruction. Contact Gwynne by e-mail at gash@UDel.Edu.

[Back to top](#)

To print this article, point and click your mouse anywhere on the article's text; then use your browser's print command.

Citation: Ash, G.E. (2002, March). Teaching readers who struggle: A pragmatic middle school framework. *Reading Online*, 5(7). Available: http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=ash/index.html

Reading Online, www.readingonline.org
Posted March 2002

© 2002 International Reading Association, Inc. ISSN 1096-1232