

WHOLE CLASS GUIDED READING IN PRACTICE

JAMIE PARKER

GREYSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL, ANTRIM

ABOUT US

- Greystone Primary School is in Antrim within a housing estate
- No of pupils - 175
- FSM – 34%
- SEN – 31%
- EAL – 15%

BACKGROUND - OUR INVOLVEMENT IN SOR

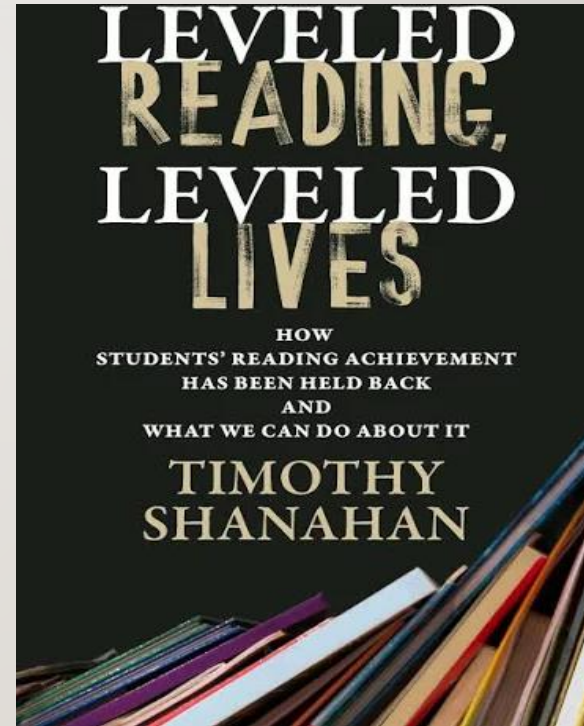
- Greystone Primary is one of a group of 20 schools from the Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special School sectors in the Antrim and Randalstown area that form the MFT (Moving Forward Together) group.
- In 2022 our MFT literacy network met with Geraldine Magennis-Clarke and began to learn about The Science of Reading.
- Following this training session (and several more) I disseminated to our staff and ignited a sudden need to change some practices within our school.
- I was aware that we couldn't do everything all at once, but I knew where to start and that was with Whole Class Guided Reading.

RESEARCH – PROFESSOR TIMOTHY SHANAHAN

- Timothy Shanahan is a prominent literacy educator and is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
- He has conducted much research into reading and the ways in which it is carried out in classes, e.g. 'Round Robin Reading', 'Three-cueing System' and 'Popcorn Reading' to name a few.
- His research has led to his very specific views on Whole Class Guided Reading (WCGR)

WHO SAYS WCGR IS A GOOD IDEA?

- Professor Timothy Shanahan has written a book on the subject where he argues that using ‘just right books’ to teach children how to read is:
 1. based on very imprecise theory
 2. does not enable children to reach their reading potential, despite seeming to be a sensible approach
 3. does not allow teachers to provide skilled and responsive scaffolding to facilitate children in negotiating suitably challenging texts.



PROFESSOR TIMOTHY SHANAHAN

‘NEVER DO WITH A SMALL GROUP WHAT YOU
COULD DO JUST AS WELL WITH WHOLE
CLASS TEACHING’

<https://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/blog/should-reading-be-taught-whole-class-or-small-group-1>



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.)

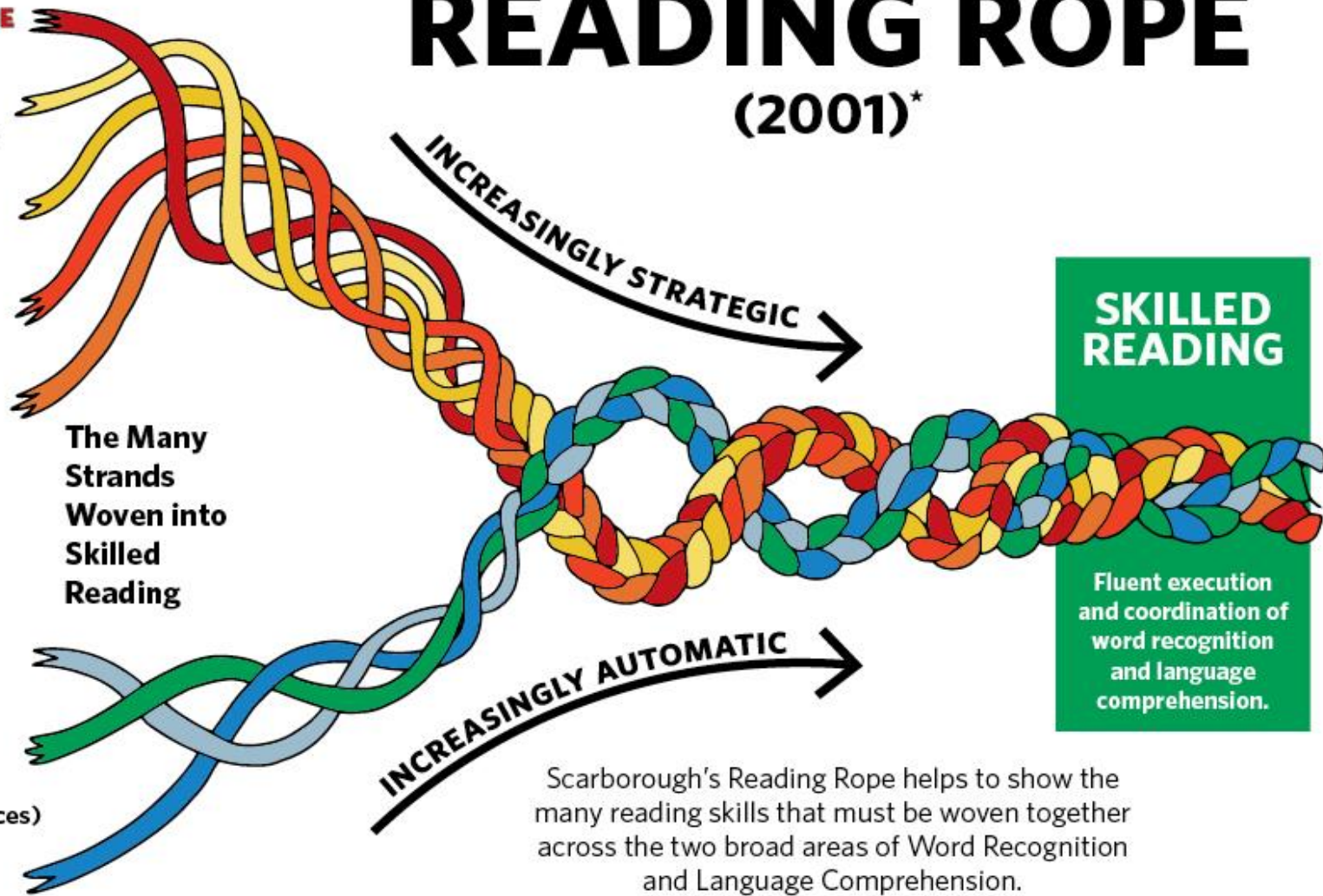
LITERACY KNOWLEDGE
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

Word Recognition

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

DECODING
(alphabetic principle,
spelling—sound correspondences)

SIGHT RECOGNITION
(of familiar words)



The Many
Strands
Woven into
Skilled
Reading

**SKILLED
READING**

Fluent execution
and coordination of
word recognition
and language
comprehension.

Scarborough's Reading Rope helps to show the many reading skills that must be woven together across the two broad areas of Word Recognition and Language Comprehension.

*What is the Reading Rope? (n.d.). BrainTrust Tutors. March 16, 2023
<https://braintrusttutors.com/what-is-the-reading-rope/>

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.)

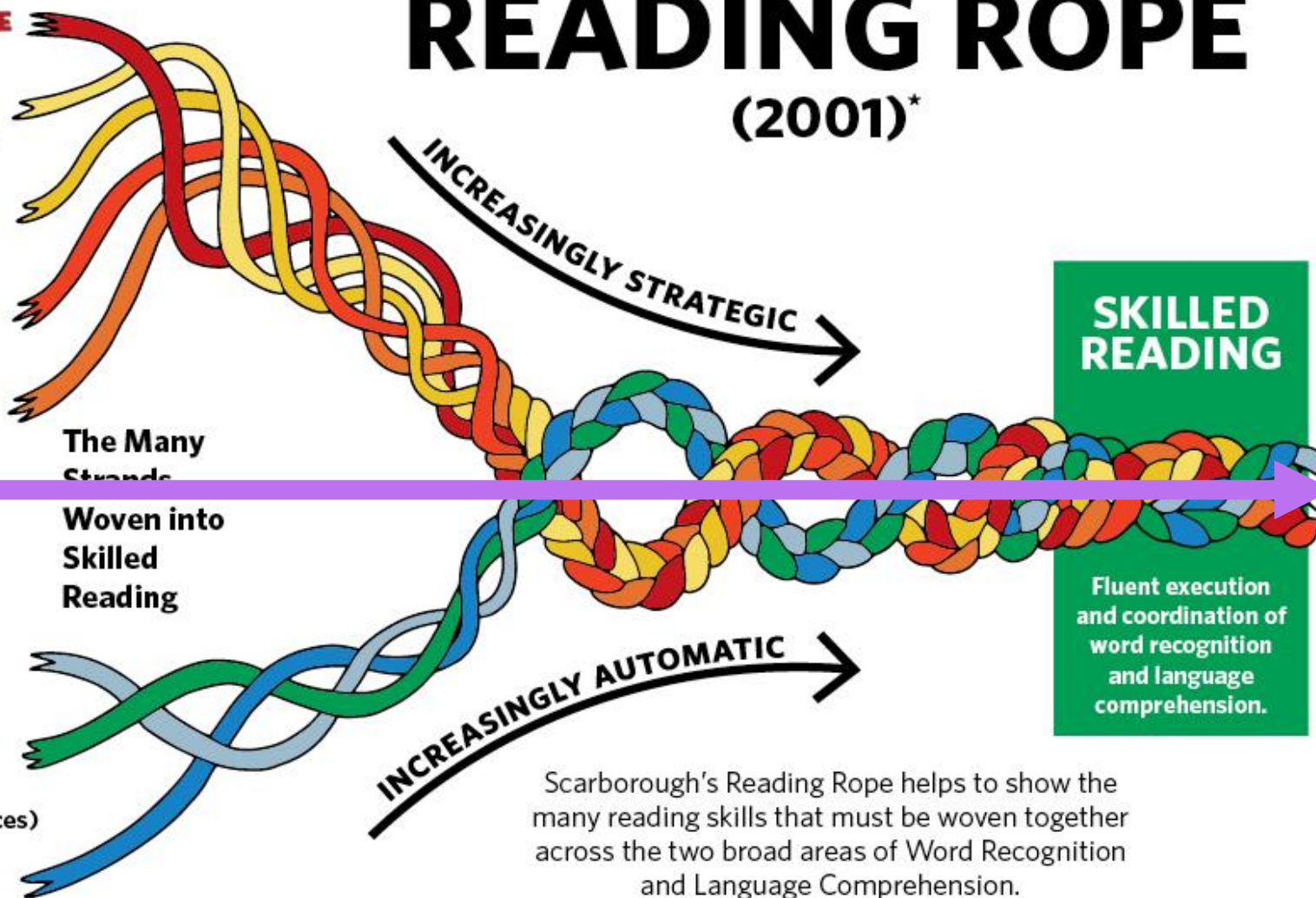
LITERACY KNOWLEDGE
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

Word Recognition

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

DECODING
(alphabetic principle,
spelling—sound correspondences)

SIGHT RECOGNITION
(of familiar words)



Oral
Reading
Fluency
(ORF)

Scarborough's Reading Rope helps to show the many reading skills that must be woven together across the two broad areas of Word Recognition and Language Comprehension.

*What is the Reading Rope? (n.d.). *BrainTrust Tutors*. March 16, 2023
<https://braintrusttutors.com/what-is-the-reading-rope/>

WHY DID WE START WCGR?

- Thinking about the research and the strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope and the fact that we have 31% SEN children and 15% EAL children we were aware that there were limitations in their vocab and comprehension as they were simply not exposed to anything other than levelled books.
- Guided Reading was small group based, and children were given levelled books that were ticked off a list.
- Children progressed through the lists and levels, reading in a 'Round Robin' setting.
- And honestly, children were bored!

WHERE DID WE START?

- I started by explaining WCGR, what it was and the benefits of it from the research I had read.
- We are very lucky that our staff could see the benefits for themselves but more importantly for the children and even those teachers not involved in WCGR were involved in the discussions etc.
- It was important for all staff to be aware of how FS start to teach reading and how it continues in KS1 and then how it would look in KS2 moving forward.

KEY STAGE 2 TEACHER OPINIONS ON GUIDED READING

- I began by asking the KS2 teachers what they thought about guided reading as it was at that moment and their comments included:
 - It is very time consuming and as a result it is difficult to give every child the time/attention they needed across the week.
 - It is very rushed, especially with seven groups to manage.
 - Those children who enjoyed reading engaged in GR but those who needed additional support were disinterested or spent much of the session on the vocab that they didn't discuss the text.
 - It is difficult to manage the rest of the class while trying to read and explore the text.
 - Planning for GR was time consuming, especially when it involved reading numerous books beforehand and devising questions and activities for up to seven groups on a weekly basis that were purposeful and challenging.

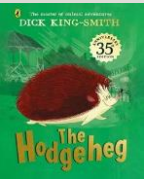
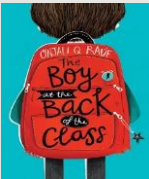
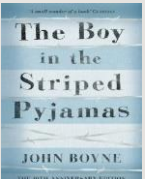
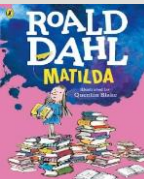

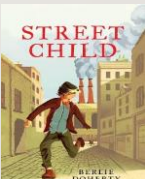
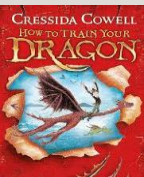
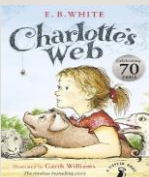

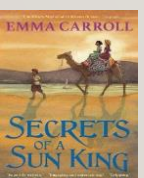
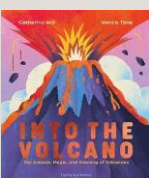

HOW DID GR (PRE WCGR) AFFECT THE CHILDREN?

- Small group structure was good for less confident readers / SEN children.
- Small reading groups meant that some children were more forthcoming with responses and answers to things related to their reading, however those children not reading at that time were less focused and therefore put less effort into their reading tasks.
- As the teacher was focused on one group, she was unable to give immediate support to those working on other activities, even for clarification or encouragement.
- Some children didn't enjoy the process as they didn't like the books they had to read.
- They didn't like sitting in small groups to read.

THE NEXT STEP

- We discussed what WCGR would look like and how it would be managed.
- We looked at the books we already had in school and those that teachers thought would be interesting and enjoyable to read.
- When we realised there weren't enough books for a whole class set, we decided to use the money from a book fair, PTA donations and also a letter to parents to purchase books.

BOOK TITLES

PRIMARY 5		PRIMARY 6		PRIMARY 7	
	The Hodgeheg By Dick King-Smith		The Boy at the Back of the Class By Onjali Q. Rauf		The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas By John Boyle
	Matilda By Roald Dahl		Ellie Engle Saves Herself By Leah Johnson		Street Child By Berlie Doherty
	How To Train Your Dragon By Cressida Cowell		Charlotte's Web By E. B. White		Wonder By R. J. Palacio
	Secrets of a Sun King By Emma Carroll		Into the Volcano By Catherine Ard & Wenjia Tang		The Wonder Brothers By Frank Cottrell-Boyce

HOW TEACHERS PLAN FOR WCGR

- They begin by reading the book so that they have a good understanding of the text.
- Following this teachers had to consider the background knowledge children should be equipped with before reading the book.
- They then 'map out' what they want the children to read during each session, after which they list some questions they intend to ask and vocabulary they want to discuss or investigate, perhaps the origins of words.
- Following this they will consider some discussion points they want to raise with the children.
- The teachers then prepare activities that will follow the reading.

WCGR IN PRIMARY 5

MATILDA – CHAPTER 15

- The class read chapter 15 ‘The Arithmetic’, most of which centres around The Trunchbull leading a PE lesson.
- Following the reading the class discussed the chapter, what happened, how they felt about the events, how the children would have felt, why Miss Trunchbull acts this way.
- As their follow-up activity children had to decide if written statements were true or false.

ACTIVITY FOR MORE ABLE CHILD AND SEN CHILD

True or False? (Justify your answers)

1. The children feel eager and want to impress Miss Trunchbull.
False because Miss Trunchbull is really mean to them and throws them out of windows. ✓

2. Miss Trunchbull uses the hammer to show off her strength.
True because Miss Trunchbull wants to show she is stronger than the children and more powerful over them. ✓

3. Matilda watches the Trunchbull closely and notices things other children would miss.
True Matilda is very intelligent and would notice a coin drop. What has Matilda noticed? ✓

4. This chapter shows that Miss Trunchbull likes to have power over the children.
True Miss Trunchbull loves to control^{control} all those sweet little children. How do you know? ✓

True or False?

1. Miss Trunchbull teaches the PE lesson. True ✓

2. Miss Trunchbull throws a heavy hammer. False ✓

3. Matilda watches everything carefully. True ✓

4. Miss Trunchbull shouts at the children. False ✓

5. The children feel safe and happy in the lesson. False ✓

6. Miss Trunchbull likes showing she is strong. True ✓

7. The children feel scared of Miss Trunchbull. True ✓

8. Miss Trunchbull is very strong. True ✓

9. Some children try to hide from Miss Trunchbull. True ✓

ACTIVITY 2: Children had to read the letter and then write interview questions for Matilda

Dear Friend,

My name is Matilda, and I am writing to tell you a little about myself. I enjoy writing letters because it gives me time to think, and I like choosing the right words to explain how I feel.

One of my favourite things to do is read. I read every day if I can. Books help me learn about the world and understand people better. When I read, I feel calm and confident, even when other parts of my life feel confusing or unfair. I believe that knowledge is important, and I like finding answers to difficult questions.

School is not always easy for me. I have noticed that some adults think they are always right, even when they are not. I don't like it when people use their power to scare others. When I see something that is unfair, it makes me feel uncomfortable, and I want to do something about it. I try to be sensible and think carefully before I act, but I also believe that standing up for what is right is very important.

Luckily, not all adults are unkind. I have a teacher who is gentle and caring, and she makes school feel like a safer place. She listens to me and encourages me, which helps me believe in myself. Being treated kindly has taught me how important it is to be fair and understanding towards others.

At home, I have learned to be independent. I often have to look after myself, and although this can be lonely, it has helped me become strong and responsible. I don't complain much, but I do think children should be cared for and listened to.

I may be young, but I pay close attention to what is happening around me. I try to do the right thing, even when it is difficult, and I don't like to ignore problems when I know I could help.

Yours sincerely,
Matilda

Dear Friend,

My name is Matilda.
I am a young girl.
I like to read books.

I read books every day.
Books make me happy.
Books help me learn new things.
When I read, I feel calm and safe.

At school, I try my best.
Some adults are kind.
Some adults are not kind.
I do not like it when people are unfair.
When someone is treated badly, it makes me sad.

I have a teacher who is kind to me.
She listens to me.
She helps me.
She makes me feel brave and happy at school.

At home, I do many things by myself.
I am independent.
Sometimes this is hard.
I think children should be cared for and listened to.

I am small, but I notice a lot.
I want to do the right thing.
I try to help when I can.

From,
Matilda

ACTIVITY 2: Children had to read the letter and then write interview questions for Matilda

Dear Friend,

I hope you won't mind me writing to you, even though we haven't met. I find it easier to explain myself on paper — words are far more obedient than people, and they rarely shout back.

Most days, I begin by reading. Books make sense of things when the world feels muddled. I've travelled further in my mind than I ever have on foot, and I've learned that stories can be a kind of shield: they keep you safe while also reminding you that bravery doesn't always roar. Sometimes it sits quietly, waiting for the right moment to act. I rather like that kind of bravery best.

At school, I've discovered that adults aren't always right just because they're tall or loud. Some people enjoy power far too much, especially when it makes others feel small. I don't think that's fair. If something is wrong, it feels impossible not to notice it — and even harder to ignore it. Justice, I've decided, is like a balance scale: if someone tips it too far, it ought to be gently corrected, even if doing so takes a little courage.

Not all grown-ups are frightening, though. One kind teacher has shown me that being gentle can be a strength. She listens — really listens — and that has taught me how important it is to see people for who they are, not who they pretend to be. When someone believes in you, it makes you believe in yourself too.

At home, I've learned to look after myself. I don't mind this as much as people might think. It's made me independent, and independence feels rather like standing on your own feet with a good book tucked under your arm — steady, prepared, and ready for whatever comes next. Still, I think everyone deserves to be noticed, especially children.

If I could tell you one thing about myself, it would be this: I may be small, but I notice everything. I think carefully before I act, but when I know something is right, I don't plan on staying silent for very long.

Yours sincerely,
Matilda

ADDITIONAL LIST OF ACTIVITIES FOR WCGR

- Character descriptions – partner activity where one children describes a character and the other has to guess from the clues and vice versa
- Whole class debate – Teacher decides the theme, but children discuss/argue the point, backed up with information from the text and their background knowledge too.
- Teacher led - Modelling comprehension skills like making predictions, inference, or clarifying vocabulary.
- Draw the Setting
- Character Interview
- Write a letter to a character
- Drama activities

THE 345 LIST OF TIER TWO VOCABULARY FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- *abandon, abstract, absolutely, access, accompany, accurate, achieve, acquire, adaptation, advantage, basic, benefit, bond, brief, budget, capable, category, cease, channel, circumstances, demonstrate, deny, design, despite, detect, develop, device, dimension*
- Above are just a few of the 345 words that we are aiming to read, learn, define and use throughout primary school.
- These words could occur in text, but it is more likely that we will use them when asking questions or setting tasks and therefore it is important that we teach these words so that children can use or understand them in the correct context.

ACTIVITY IDEA FOR 345 LIST WORDS

WORD OF THE WEEK

Word	Part of speech
Synonym	Antonym
Definition	
Sentence	
Illustration	

A TYPICAL LESSON

- Whole Class Guided Reading Sessions last between 30-45 minutes and there are a minimum of two sessions per week.
- The session starts with a recap of the previous chapter led by the children – to remind them of the content and also inform anyone who has been absent. This lasts for a couple of minutes but it is valuable to all.
- Teachers set the purpose of the lesson e.g. Look for ways the author describes the character (start of the book) OR Make predictions based on previous events and character behaviour (middle of the book).
- The class teacher starts the reading and will read a paragraph or two (maximum).
- Each child reads during the week and this gives the teacher opportunities to monitor fluency, expression, levels of confidence, awareness of grammar and their comprehension skills.

MONITORING FLUENCY DURING WCGR

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL FLUENCY RUBRIC

Name:	Level:	Class:	Date:
Text 1:	Text 2:		

	1	2	3	4
Expression and Volume	Reads in a quiet voice as if to get words out. The reading does not sound natural like talking to a friend.	Reads in a quiet voice. The reading sounds natural in part of the text, but the reader does not always sound like they are talking to a friend.	Reads with volume and expression. However, sometimes the reader slips into expressionless reading and does not sound like they are talking to a friend.	Reads with varied volume and expression. The reader sounds like they are talking to a friend with their voice matching the interpretation of the passage.
Phrasing	Reads word-by-word in a monotone voice.	Reads in two or three word phrases, not adhering to punctuation, stress and intonation.	Reads with a mixture of run-ons, mid sentence pauses for breath, and some chopiness. There is reasonable stress and intonation.	Reads with good phrasing; adhering to punctuation, stress and intonation.
Smoothness	Frequently hesitates while reading, sounds out words, and repeats words or phrases. The reader makes multiple attempts to read the same passage.	Reads with extended pauses or hesitations. The reader has many "trough spots."	Reads with occasional breaks in rhythm. The reader has difficulty with specific words and/or sentence structures.	Reads smoothly with some breaks, but self-corrects with difficult words and/or sentence structures.
Pace	Reads slowly and laboriously.	Reads moderately slowly.	Reads generally at an appropriate rate throughout reading.	Reads at an appropriate conversational pace throughout the reading.

Scores of 10 or more indicate that the student is making good progress in fluency. Total: _____

Adapted from Zutell, J. & Rasinski, T. V. (1991). Training teachers to attend to their students' oral reading fluency in. *Theory to Practice*, 30, 211-217.

A TYPICAL LESSON CONTINUED...

- Teachers regularly pause during reading to ask questions that challenge children's thinking and deepen their understanding of the text, and they will seek to develop their vocabulary knowledge.
- After about 10 minutes the children will pause WCGR and the reading will vary slightly. Sometimes they will work in pairs to read a set amount with a task at the end of it.
- Sometimes there will be choral reading in mixed ability pairs – children read in unison and usually a more proficient reader leads it. This builds reading fluency, confidence, expression, and comprehension by providing a supportive environment for less confident readers to practice with peers. This type of reading is regularly carried out with performance poetry, so children are familiar with it.
- Sometimes we will echo read, especially if we want to model the reading style. In this case the teacher reads the sentence, and the children read it back, mimicking the way the teacher has read.
- These techniques make sure that reluctant or struggling readers get to read rather than getting lost in the midst of the text.



WHAT IMPACT DOES WCGR HAVE ON THE CHILDREN?

- Children, regardless of ability have access to the same high-quality text
- Weaker readers are exposed to rich vocabulary, complex sentence structure and engaging storylines and they tend to take part in the discussions about the reading.
- Stronger readers will improve their fluency, deepen their understanding of text and enable more discussions.
- Huge improvement in confidence.
- Improvement in language comprehension
- Much improved awareness of grammar and how this dictates how sentences should be read.
- Inclusion – All children (regardless of needs) are included in WCGR and this boosts their self-esteem.

POSITIVES FOR THE TEACHERS

- Planning – teachers need only plan for one book as opposed to up to 7.
- Much more time manageable
- Many more opportunities to discuss the text, look at language structure, talk about vocabulary and what it means.
- Guided Reading is much more focused now with limited/no distractions.
- Time to model reading to all of the children at the same time (Often by Echo Reading)
- Time to enjoy the reading process with the children.

RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

We use NGRT to assess reading at the beginning of each term and our results have shown an increase of scores from September to January of:

P5 – 76% of children's scores increased

P6 – 67% of children's scores increased

P7 – 54% of children's scores increased

SEN CHILDREN AND MORE ABLE CHILDREN

- How do we meet the needs of the SEN children and Instructional level children?
 - SEN children still take part in WCGR and they are particularly excited when reading takes place.
 - They thrive on the opportunity to talk about the same book as their peers and often they pick up on things that perhaps others haven't thought about.
 - Those who struggle with reading will not only read as a whole class, but they will also read independently (with an adult) on a 1:1 basis (outside of WCGR lessons).
- How do we challenge the more able children?
 - More able children are challenged through the activities linked to their text e.g. Asking children to 'Tell Me About' to encourage deeper responses rather than simple retrieval, teaching skills such as compare and contrast characters/settings, use word webs for new vocabulary.

READING FOR ENJOYMENT

- There has never been a better time to promote a reading culture in your school, particularly as it's The National Year of Reading.
- Remember to encourage 'read-alouds' in your classrooms – The Literacy Framework for Primary Schools (page 33) ...'Highlights the importance of fostering reading for pleasure as a driver of motivation and lifelong engagement, offering practical strategies such as daily read-alouds, creating reading-rich environments and family involvement'
- Each teacher in our school also reads to their class so that they get used to hearing and engaging in texts outside of 'reading time'. This excites the children! We want to fuel that enthusiasm for reading in Greystone Primary and a big part of that is Reading for Pleasure.
- Every class in our school visits the local library to choose their own books.
- Once a week our Primary 7 children visit our Primary 1 children and read with them.
- Teachers read too! – D.E.A.R.


WHERE NEXT?

- P4 – trial whole class reading in summer term
- Continue to build (ORF) Oral Reading Fluency through various ways including repeated reading, echo reading and choral reading - The Mega Book of Fluency (2021 -Tim Rasinski and Melissa Cheesman) has a fantastic range of activities to promote this.
- Look at Phonics and Spelling
- This is just one aspect of the SoR and we are taking it a step at a time – Rome wasn't built in a day!

WHERE TO START IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY

- Step 1 – Carry out a baseline to ascertain where you are now. Follow the link to The Reading League ‘Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines’

<https://www.thereadingleague.org/curriculum-evaluation-guidelines/>

- Step 2 – WCGR – Check the books you have and decide if they will be a good match the KS2 classes.
 - Step 3 – Ask teachers to read the books and devise questions and activities to match.
 - Step 4 – Plan for the sessions.
 - Step 5 - Begin reading in the classroom.
- 

RESOURCES AND READING

- Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001)
- 'Making Whole Class Work More Effectively' – <https://www.readingrockets.org/blogs/shanahan-on-literacy/making-whole-class-work-more-effective>
- HFL Education - <https://www.hfleducation.org/blog/whole-class-guided-reading-ks2>
- Shanahan on Literacy - <https://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/>
- 'Target the Problem!' - <https://www.readingrockets.org/helping-all-readers/why-some-kids-struggle/target-problem>
- Taylor and Francis Online – Journal-Education-Reading Psychology- Volume 42 issue 3 – The Role of Background Knowledge in Reading <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02702711.2021.1888348#d1e192>
- The 345 List of Tier Two Vocabulary For Primary Schools – Christopher Such - *The Art and Science of Teaching Primary Reading*
- The Multi Dimensional Fluency Rubric – <https://www.forgecpd.com/post/a-focus-on-fluency>
- Strong Foundations: A Literacy Framework for Primary Schools - <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/DE%20Literacy%20Framework%20%2826-1-26%29.pdf>

THANK YOU

- Any Questions?