



Session 3: Writing and Language Comprehension

*Teacher Professional Development Series:
K-3 Writing*



Presenter Introduction

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Today's Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will understand how the “language comprehension” strands of Scarborough’s Reading Rope inform high-quality writing instruction in grades K-3.

What is Writing and How Do We Teach It?



- Writing is a complex process that requires students to manage many factors simultaneously - word choice, spelling, syntax, background information, and content knowledge.
- For students who are not yet at a point of encoding with sufficient automaticity (even if the encoding is inventive), or those with limited oral language skills, work with writing can (and should) begin orally, and should focus on responding to text - either by sharing ideas or responding to questions.

SOURCE: [The Writing Revolution](#)

What is Writing and How Do We Teach It?

- In grades K-3, the focus of writing instruction - like reading instruction - should be on two key areas:
 - building students' capacity to encode with automaticity,
 - building their capacity to develop complex thoughts that they can communicate through writing once their encoding skills "catch up."



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.)

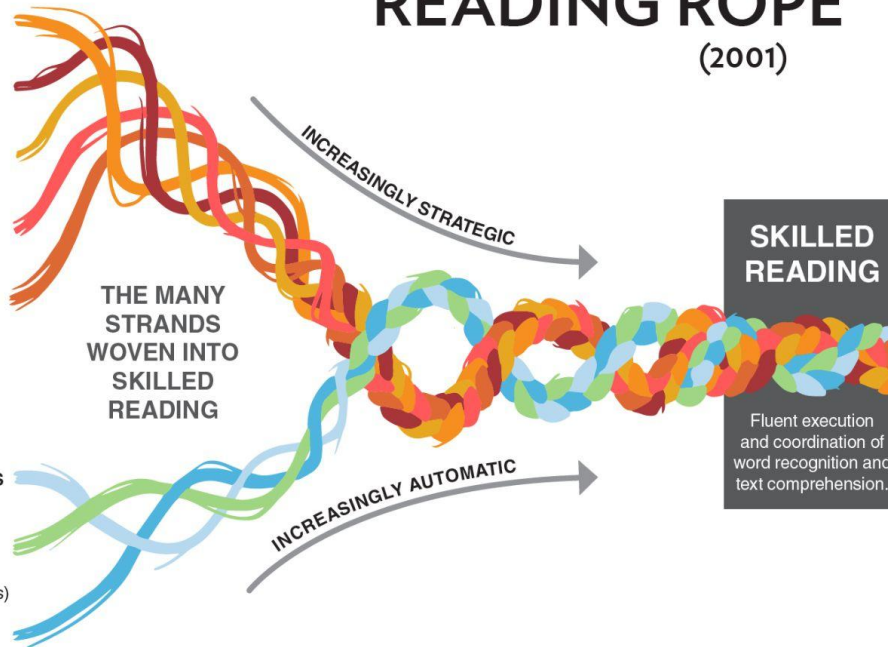
LITERACY KNOWLEDGE
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

WORD RECOGNITION

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

DECODING
(alphabetic principle,
spelling–sound correspondences)

SIGHT RECOGNITION
(of familiar words)



What is Writing and How Do We Teach It?

- Building students' language comprehension is an important step in supporting their writing development, particularly at the earliest ages.
- This work is *embedded in the curriculum* - not separate from it. Whatever curriculum you use to develop your students' knowledge - is the foundation upon which you will build your students' ability to respond to and write. This can include ELA curriculum, but also social studies, science, and even math!



What is Writing and How Do We Teach It?

- At the K-3 level, helping students to clearly communicate and articulate ideas that they will ultimately communicate through writing is an important first step.
- Understanding how to appropriately respond to questions orally is also an important first step in students' writing journeys. This work can begin in toddler-hood.
- Guiding students' to respond to questions with relevant responses - often grounded in textual evidence - sets a foundation for high quality written response.
- The teacher can model writing for students based on their responses to questions.



Writing and the Science of Reading

As students' ability to encode words with automaticity grows, it's important to give them opportunities to generate their own sentences.

- Students must understand the components of a strong sentence. Building their understanding of sentences and supporting their ability to craft increasingly complex sentences will prepare them to communicate complex ideas through writing.
- Sentence level work can be done by having students respond to prompts about what they read (story questions).
- Sentence level work is best done in the context of the content that you are teaching - not separate from that learning.



SOURCE: [The Writing Revolution](#)

Writing and the Science of Reading

- There are many resources available to support students' ability to write high-quality sentences available through [The Writing Revolution](#) website.
- Skills you will want to focus on: punctuation (capitalization, commas, end punctuation), distinguishing between sentences and sentence fragments, sentence types, and conjunctions).
 - You can support this by having students unscramble sentences, complete unfinished sentences, providing feedback on sentences they complete.
 - This work is embedded in the work of your curriculum.



What is Writing and How Do We Teach It?

- Building knowledge among K-3 students is also an important part of high-quality writing instruction.
- As students' knowledge grows, what they can communicate in writing improves significantly, as do the connections they are able to make between topics.



What is Writing and How Do We Teach It?

- Another aspect of writing that you will want to develop with your students' is their awareness of *purpose* and *audience*.
 - Shift away from generating essays for the sake of writing essays, and instead understand writing as a purposeful form of communication for a particular audience.



What is Writing and How Do We Teach It?



- Just like with the Reading Rope, as students' ability to encode words with automaticity increases and their ability to craft meaningful, relevant sentences grows, they will be ready to develop high-quality essays in response to text.
- This work should be embedded in the curriculum, not separate from it. You do not need a separate "writing block," but instead need opportunities for students to practice writing in the context of the work that you are already doing.

How do leaders support this work?

- Create school-wide systems that support a shared writing vision and shared writing strategies.
- Schedules that include time to explicitly teach writing embedded in the content of the curriculum.
- Provide professional development opportunities on writing for *all* teachers.
- Develop school/system wide strategies for writing instruction.
- Ensure that writing aligned to the language comprehension strands are included at all grade levels.
- Cultivate a writing culture that views writing as an avenue to support and improve student reading across all content areas.





Questions or Suggestions?

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