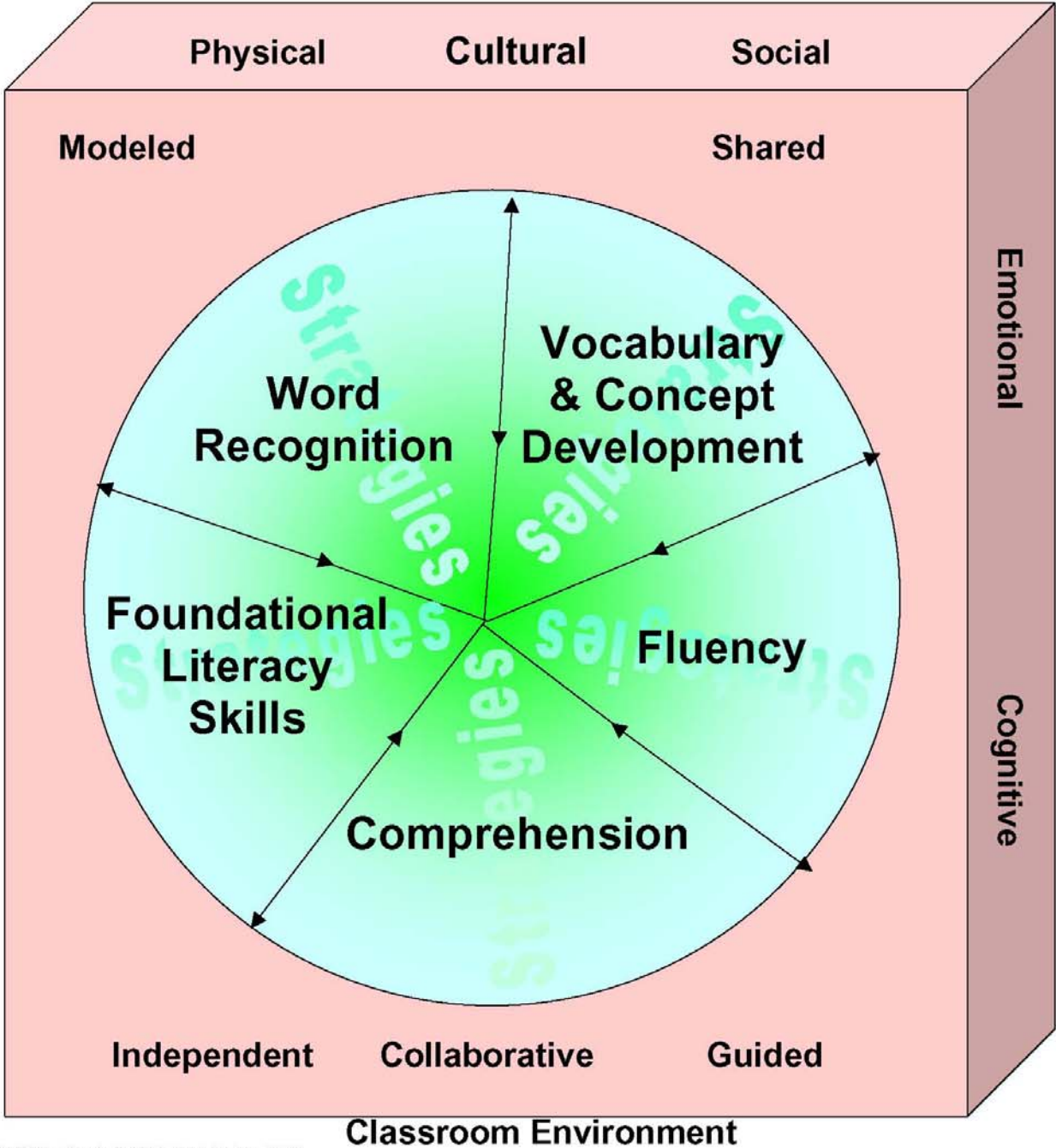


Reading Model for the Wake County Public School System



An Overview of Reading in the Wake County Public School System

Background

As high stakes testing and accountability initiatives increased nationwide, the Board of Education for the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) set a goal. The goal stated, “By 2003, 95% of our students tested will be [reading] at or above grade level as measured by North Carolina End-of-Grade [Reading] Testing at grades 3 and 8.

During the 1999-2000 school year, representatives from Curriculum and Instruction (Language Arts, English as a Second Language, Academically Gifted, Title I) and Special Education Services came together to describe existing efforts and streamline opportunities for increasing student achievement in reading. This joint group reviewed available literacy assessments, instructional strategies and materials, and staff development opportunities in WCPSS. Additionally, this committee started the process of developing a model for the delivery of reading instruction in WCPSS. In 2000-2001, a new committee was formed to continue the discussion of system-wide reading instructional services and to develop a means of communicating that information to WCPSS principals and teachers.

The Instructional Services Division reorganized in 2002-03 and created a K-12 Literacy Department. This department represents both general and special education. The mission of this department is to provide differentiated support for all WCPSS teachers to increase their capacity to maximize the literacy development of *every* student.

The school system achieved substantial progress toward the 2003 Board Goal. At the time the goal was set, 79 percent of third graders were at grade level in reading. Eighty-nine percent achieved grade level proficiency in 2003. The Board of Education is currently setting a new goal for beyond 2003 that will address reading achievement for all student populations, one of the requirements of the “No Child Left Behind” legislation.

Proficient Readers

Since the Board Goal 2003 required students to reach grade-level proficiency, it was important to first define the characteristics of a proficient reader. According to several national research reports (*The National Reading Panel*, 2000; *Methods of Teaching Reading: Key Issues in Research and Implications for Practice*, Harrison, 1998; *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, 1998; *What Does Research Say About Reading*, 1991), proficient readers have the ability to:

- manipulate the sounds that make up spoken language,
- understand the relationship between letters and sounds,
- automatically and rapidly recognize letters and words,
- use vocabulary knowledge,
- read fluently with accuracy, speed, and expression,
- use prior knowledge to construct meaning,
- use context as an aid in comprehension,
- use comprehension strategies to enhance understanding and enjoyment of what is read (predict, clarify, pose questions, make connections, summarize, etc.),
- monitor their reading for understanding and flexibly use strategies according to text, task, and situation, and
- access a repertoire of reading strategies, organizational patterns, and genres.

Research has also shown that effective reading instruction incorporates five major components. Good readers exhibit proficiency in each component.

- **Foundational Literacy Skills** (Concepts of Print, Letter Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, Alphabetic Principle)
- **Word Recognition** (Phonics and Decoding, Sight Word Development, Appreciation of Morphemes)
- **Language and Vocabulary/Concept Development** (Listening Comprehension, Oral Expression, Dictionary Use, Inferred Meanings from Context, Proper Usage, Shades of Meaning, General Knowledge)
- **Fluency** (Ability to Read with Accuracy, Speed, and Proper Expression)
- **Comprehension** (Understanding Narrative and Expository Text)

Underlying these five essential components of reading is strategy instruction. Strategies are processes used by proficient learners to construct meaning. These processes, which integrate knowledge of the five components, are problem-solving actions that make learning more efficient. Students must not only know *what* these strategies are, but *when* and *how* to use them to facilitate learning. Strategies must be modeled and explicitly taught. The goal is for students to develop an effective self-extending system of learning and become conscious and thoughtful about their use of strategies.

WCPSS Comprehensive Reading Model

The work of the committees culminated in the development of a reading model that reflects the major factors influencing proficiency in reading. This model depicts what the student brings to the classroom (cognitive, emotional, social, cultural and physical factors), the importance of the classroom environment, and a comprehensive, balanced approach to reading instruction (see *Balanced Reading*). This instructional approach scaffolds students' learning and fosters their success through modeled reading, shared reading, guided reading, collaborative reading, and independent reading (see *Scaffolding Reading Instruction*). This model also includes the five essential components of reading supported by strategy instruction.

The shaded circle in the model represents the instructional support available for individual students in WCPSS. Most students develop proficiency through initial instruction in the five components of reading (represented by the lightest shade in the model). If a student encounters difficulty in one or more components of reading as determined by observation and assessment, the process of planning instruction for that student becomes more complex (represented by more intensive shades of color). Complexity in the process of planning (see Teaching/Learning Cycle) includes:

- using more focused assessment(s) and in-depth analysis,
- determining appropriate instructional approach(es), and
- selecting and/or modifying appropriate materials to match targeted need(s) and learning style(s).

Students needing more instructional support may be served individually or in flexible groups to address their identified area(s) of need. The arrows indicate the fluid nature of planning and instructional approaches based on student needs.

Effective reading instruction provides differentiated structure and support for students. In order for this to occur, teachers need access to resources that support their increasing levels of expertise. With practice and the development of skills and strategies, the ownership of learning is transferred from the teacher to the student and is ultimately internalized by the student. The goal of WCPSS is for each student to achieve proficiency in reading.