

## Our Theory-to-Practice as Reading Teachers

“Our Theory-to-Practice as Reading Teachers” is a document that CTL teachers have been building and revising for a long time. It will never be finished—on purpose—as we continue to read research, observe our students, and reflect on our practice. In just a few pages, in the most straightforward language we can devise, we lay claim to a shared knowledge base for our teaching.

I invite other K–8 faculties to cut to the chase in the same way by defining a pedagogy that matches your theories of reading development and literary appreciation. This can be a challenging exercise for a group of teachers. But it’s also collaborative, affirming, and useful—to teachers as professional colleagues; to students who benefit from their teachers’ shared vision and methods; and to their families, who learn why teachers are teaching as they do.

### Because we believe that...

### we...

- 
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• instruction should be knowledge-based,</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• read research, read about pedagogy, observe students, and gather and interpret classroom data.</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• learning to read is a difficult, time-intensive process,</li></ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• do everything we can to make reading predictable, sensible, easy, meaningful, and enjoyable.</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• interest leads to engagement, and engagement leads to achievement,</li></ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• invite each student to choose the books he or she reads.</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• it takes frequent, sustained practice to learn to read with fluency and accuracy,</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• make time in class every day for students to read books they want to read;</li><li>• ask students to read every night at home for half an hour;</li><li>• make independent book reading the primary activity of our reading program.</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• children comprehend what makes sense to them,</li></ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ask students to read books they can understand.</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• student readers benefit from support, encouragement, and advice,</li></ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• confer with individual readers;</li><li>• present practical information to the whole group in minilessons.</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• students need help finding books they want to read,</li></ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• present bookwalks and booktalks and invite students to give booktalks, too.</li></ul>  |

## Our Theory-to-Practice as Reading Teachers

### Because we believe that...

- independent readers need access to sufficient quantities of intriguing titles that represent a range of fiction and nonfiction genres,
- books that tell stories compel students to read, practice reading, gain experience with prose structures, and learn how to “chunk” meaning,
- the English language is not reliably phonetic (fewer than half of English words are spelled and pronounced the way they sound),
- students need to learn how to take control of their experiences and processes as readers,
- student readers should recognize and celebrate their preferences, accomplishments, and growth,
- growth in reading is individual, gradual, and advances on many fronts (e.g., decoding strategies, stamina, vocabulary, critical abilities),
- parents should be involved in and supportive of their children’s reading,
- children should read at home and year-round,
- children should read to learn as well as learn to read,

### we...

- build and maintain enticing, age-appropriate classroom libraries;
- make classroom libraries a budget priority;
- read book reviews, browse bookstore collections, and read children’s and young adult literature.
- eschew textbooks, newspapers and magazines, instructional guides, etc., in favor of narrative genres.
- teach beginning readers multiple approaches to word recognition: graphophonetics as well as syntax, semantics, patterns, word analysis skills, and the cues provided by illustrations.
- discuss different ways to select books; encourage students to abandon books they don’t understand or enjoy; teach students about skimming and skipping.
- ask students to keep simple records: numbers of books, titles and authors, and ratings of quality (1–10) and difficulty (H, JR, C);
- ask students to assess their progress and set goals at the end of each trimester.
- assess students’ growth based on their progress toward individual goals.
- write and distribute a newsletter, “Reading: How Parents Can Help.”
- provide each student in K–4 with an overnight bookbag;
- encourage each student to borrow multiple books to read over the summer and supply summer bookbags, K–8.
- use children’s literature in every subject.

## Our Theory-to-Practice as Reading Teachers

### Because we believe that...

- people read for many reasons,
- reading is one of the best things about being human and alive,
- “children grow into the intellectual life around them” (Vygotsky),

### we...

- teach strategies for different kinds of texts and purposes.
- demonstrate the pleasure we derive from stories, poems, plays, lyrics, and book illustrations.
- create a school-wide reading culture, including such rituals and traditions as
  - daily morning meetings with poems and songs on charts,
  - a school poem and song,
  - K–4 reading buddies/tutorials,
  - poetry-based word work in K,
  - reading and unpacking poems in 1–8,
  - readers’ theater in 1–2,
  - correspondence about books in 3–8,
  - readers’ roundtable discussions in 5–6,
  - birthday-book gifts and bookplates,
  - books-we-love displays, and
  - a common approach to teaching reading, reading workshop, which students can anticipate and rely on, K–8.