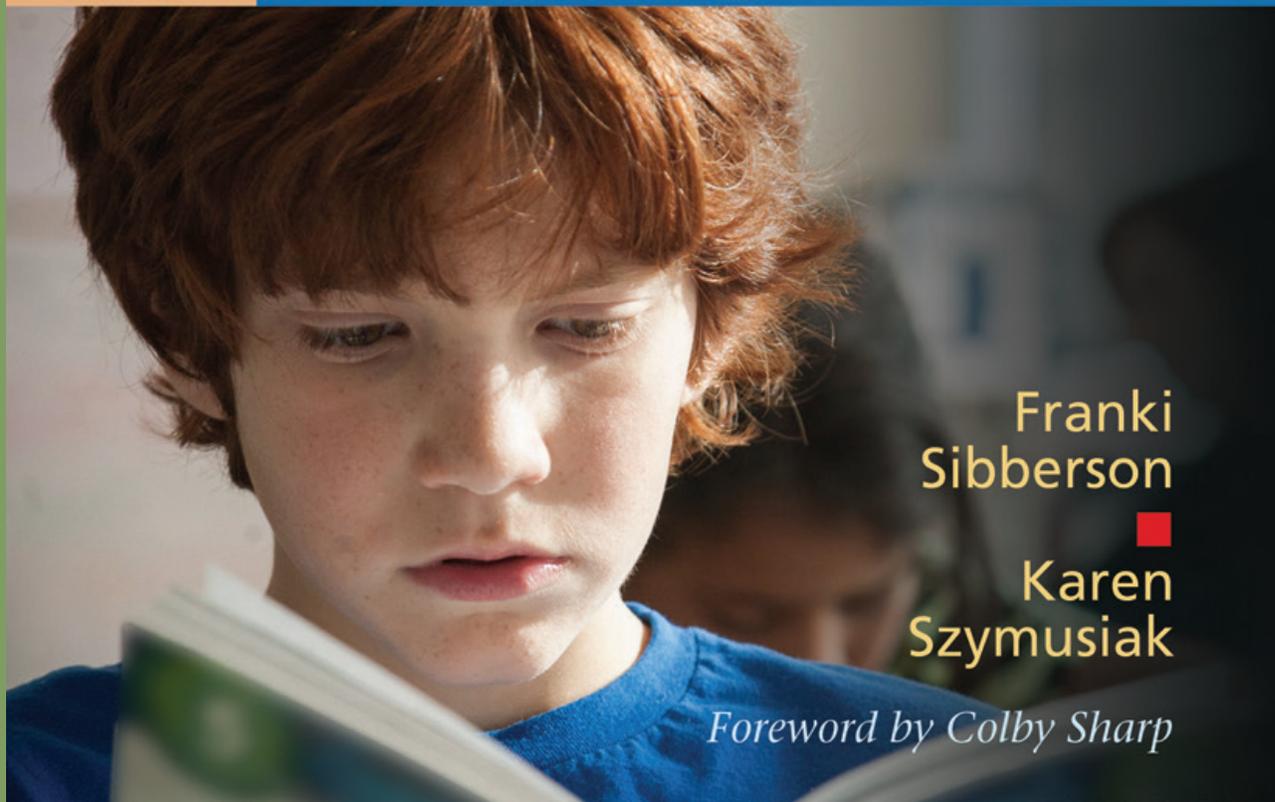


# Study Guide

*second  
edition*

# Still Learning to Read

teaching students in grades 3–6



Franki  
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■  
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*Foreword by Colby Sharp*



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## Summary

In this new edition of *Still Learning to Read*, authors Franki Sibberson and Karen Szymusiak focus on the needs of students in grades 3-6, sharing updated strategies to enhance all aspects of reading instruction. From reading workshop and read-aloud time to classroom design and digital tools, Franki and Karen understand and address the critical components of literacy that enable intermediate grades students to develop the skills and habits of good readers. The book includes expanded examples of mini-lessons as well as online videos that capture the real work of teachers and students as they make book choices, discuss their reading notebooks, and much more.

# Chapter 1

## Teaching Reading in the Upper Elementary Classroom

### Quote to Ponder

*For children who have only recently started to read novels or who are encountering a challenging nonfiction genre for the first time, this need for perseverance is difficult to explain. We need to think about ways to teach our students how to get through slow or confusing parts of a book (7).*

### Reflection and Extension

- What do you love about teaching reading in the upper elementary classroom? What are the challenges?
- Which books are most popular with your students? What features do these titles have that make them enjoyable and accessible to students?
- Review the list of skills needed for reading complex texts in the intermediate grades (10-11). With your colleagues, discuss where and how these skills are addressed in the curriculum and reflected in your classroom practices. Consider how you could integrate these skills more thoroughly.



# Chapter 2

## Being Intentional About Classroom Library Design

### Quote to Ponder

*If we want our students to build agency and identity as readers, we want them to take ownership of their reading. We want our students to learn the strategies and tools for matching themselves with the texts that are right for them. We believe strongly in student choice and have learned that the purposefulness with which we design our classroom libraries can be the most important tool we have to support our students in becoming independent in their choices (16-17).*

### Reflection and Extension

- How does your current classroom library design support student book choice? How do you curate your classroom library to keep it engaging for your students?
- In their book, Franki and Karen stress the importance of creating classroom libraries that value every reader (17). What message does the setup and content of your classroom library convey to students? What changes can you make to ensure that all students feel welcomed and supported as readers?
- With your colleagues, schedule an after-school walking tour where you can visit one another's classroom libraries. Ask each teacher to briefly



share his or her intentions for the library, noting its standout features as well as ways it could be improved. Invite colleagues to offer suggestions for filling in the gaps. Refer to the list on page 18 for ideas.

- View and discuss the video clip, “Grades Three and Four Room Tour,” which is linked through a QR code in this chapter. What insights did you gain?

# Chapter 3

## Preparing for Thoughtful Instruction Before Our Students Enter the Classroom

### Quote to Ponder

*Because we believe that the classroom environment is a child's third teacher, we put a lot of time and energy into getting our classroom ready for children before they arrive. We have found that the more we learn about children and learning, the more our classroom changes (34).*

### Reflection and Extension

- Using the list on page 36 as a guide, write a statement of beliefs about your classroom culture. Share the list with members of your team or book study group.
- Reflecting on your statement of beliefs and insights gained from colleagues, what would you like to change about your current classroom design?
- How might you use wall space to support learning, especially conversations around reading? Which permanent wall spaces do you think are critical in your classroom? Why?
- With your colleagues, discuss how you keep up with books for your students. Are there ways you could share the load with one another, perhaps by developing expertise with certain genres and

then communicating strong choices to colleagues who would focus on other genres?

- On pages 46-53, consider the various ways that Franki and Karen nourish and build the reading and writing habits of their students. Choose one or more strategies to try with your students.

# Chapter 4

## Slowing Down During the First Six Weeks

### Quote to Ponder

*The conversations we start in September will be the foundation for the critical conversations we have and the learning we do throughout the year. We need to go slowly. That doesn't mean we are not teaching. Taking the first steps toward learning who our readers are and establishing the routines that will promote thoughtful reading practices is the strong teaching we need to have at the beginning of the school year. It's this slow, thoughtful, and purposeful beginning that establishes a reading community that will support all readers throughout the school year (60).*

### Reflection and Extension

- What big goals do you have for the first six weeks of school?
- What might you do differently to build your reading community this year?
- How might you use the first six weeks to build skills around talk?
- With your colleagues, develop some strategy lessons to help intermediate grades students persevere when they get “stuck” reading more complex texts.



# Chapter

# 5

## Grouping Beyond Levels

### Quote to Ponder

*We make better instructional decisions when we know our students well (78).*

### Reflection and Extension

- What challenges do you face when it comes to grouping for instruction?
- What role do reading levels play in your classroom?
- How do you determine when to confer with a child and when to include a child in a small group?
- Using the list that the authors share on pages 78-79 as a guide, develop a menu of questions to use with students when discussing their reading habits.
- In Figures 5.2a and 5.2b, Franki and Karen share some samples of planning forms they use for whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction. Consider how you could adapt these or create new ones to enable your students to benefit from a variety of instruction.
- View and discuss the video clip, “Finding Themes: The Summer My Father Was Ten,” which is linked through a QR code in this chapter. What insights did you gain?



# Chapter 6

## Read Aloud to Foster Writing and Conversations That Grow Thinking

### Quote to Ponder

*Writing in response to their reading experiences helps students clarify their thinking, develop new ideas, and recognize their unique qualities as readers (103-104).*

### Reflection and Extension

- Describe your current read-aloud time. What goals do you have? How do you choose books? Discuss your process with your colleagues. You might use this reflection from Franki and Karen to frame your conversation: “Now that we are more aware of the possibilities of read-aloud, we select books differently. We still want to choose books that represent the best in literature, but we also consider the match between the book and what our students need. We no longer choose books for the entire year before school begins. How can we? We know books well, and we think ahead of time about those that would make good read-alouds. However, we also watch and listen to our students, because when we recognize what will help them become better readers, we are in a position to choose the best books for reading aloud” (105).

- What is going well for you in read-aloud? What challenges do you face?
- In this chapter, Franki and Karen share many ways to provide scaffolds for students for the writing and talk around read-aloud. These tools include small notebooks, anchor charts, and thinking partners. Choose one or more of these methods to use with your students and share the results with colleagues.
- How can you be more intentional about your book choice for read-alouds throughout the year?

# Chapter 7

## Intentional Reading Choices Throughout the Year

### Quote to Ponder

*Much of the joy of reading is in finding a book that we hope to love or one that we are eager to read. We can't take that part of reading away from our students. We can't expect our students to choose books quickly if we want their choices to be thoughtful or want them to read deeply. We need to give them the time to choose good books as well as the tools and strategies to do so. We value good book choice as much as we value other reading skills (126).*

### Reflection and Extension

- How can you support student book choice throughout the year?
- Think of a student who has difficulty choosing or sticking with books. What information do you have about why this happens? What might you try to support him or her? What tools might you use to help your students to think ahead as readers?
- View and discuss the two video clips, “Next-Read Stack: Conferring for Independence” and “Getting More from Wonderopolis,” which are linked through QR codes in this chapter. What insights did you gain?

# Chapter 8

## Text Complexity: Scaffolding for Reading Fiction

### Quote to Ponder

*We approach our conferences ready to listen first. Our first responsibility is to understand the child's thinking—to realize how he or she is making sense of text. And then our job is to build on that and help that child read a bit more deeply (156).*

### Reflection and Extension

- How might you use wordless books to scaffold close reading?
- What are the ways you make time to listen to your students' thinking? What have you learned recently from listening to a student?
- Is there a lesson cycle topic that was not mentioned in the book that you think would be helpful for your students?
- View and discuss the video clip, "Reading Notebooks Discussion," which is linked through a QR code in this chapter. What insights did you gain?

# Chapter 9

## Text Complexity: Scaffolding for Reading Nonfiction

### Quote to Ponder

*We can no longer think of nonfiction as a separate type of reading or as a one-time unit of study. We've realized that we need to think in bigger ways about nonfiction reading in our classrooms and change our entire stance on teaching it (161).*

### Reflection and Extension

- Do you feel as comfortable with nonfiction reading as you do with fiction reading? Explain.
- Read back through Franki and Karen's "Questions We Ask Ourselves About Our Stance on Nonfiction" (162). How can you use this list, and any additions that you think are necessary, to refresh your beliefs and practices to teaching nonfiction and to embed nonfiction into daily routines more often?
- What challenges do you notice your students have when reading nonfiction?
- View and discuss the video clip, "Making the Most of News Magazines," which is linked through a QR code in this chapter. What insights did you gain?

# Chapter 10

## The Role of Close Reading in Grades 3–6

### Quote to Ponder

*It is when our students take control of their own reading and decide on their own to read with a certain lens that we see the power of close reading (188).*

### Reflection and Extension

- How has your thinking about close reading changed over the last few years?
- What are some ways to help support students in rereading and finding evidence to support their thinking?
- Which books have been most helpful to you for teaching close reading?

