

# Study Guide for *Comprehension Going Forward*

**Samantha Bennett**



Congratulations on choosing a compelling, challenging, and nourishing text for your study group. All of your favorite authors are here, plus a few new voices to help you get smarter and feel energized to help your students be more powerful readers, writers, and thinkers—starting now!

Because we believe that learning is inherently social, we invite you to dig in to *Comprehension Going Forward* with a small group of interesting colleagues. Whether you meet once a week or less often; whether you use just this text, or a combination of texts and classroom visits for your study—make the leap into organized, reflective conversation around a common goal. It is in these conversations that we find our own ideas clarified and enriched, we are encouraged to take risks in our classroom practice, and thrilled to bring stories of our students' learning back to the group to plan next steps and continue an ongoing cycle of improvement. Two beliefs shine brightly here: we are never finished learning and we are smarter together.

While there are many ways to structure a study group, it is most important to foster a climate in which teachers feel open and safe to participate in the ongoing conversations and exchange of ideas. Here are a few things you might consider.

### *Group Size*

Often the optimal number is four to six to ensure there is time for all to share their thinking. If you have a larger group, you may want to kick off discussion with a general question and then break into smaller groups. The larger group can reassemble at the end to debrief.

### *Build in Choice*

Choice drives engagement, for teachers and students alike. Will participants have choice in the chapters they read? The questions they tackle? How they share with the group what they figured out? Giving study group participants autonomy in how and/or what they study will increase the ongoing motivation and engagement to continue.

### *Create an Agenda*

Make sure you have planned a beginning and ending time and always honor those times. Everyone is busy and knowing there will be a start and end time is important. Always leave knowing when you will meet again and who will facilitate.

### *Facilitate the Learning and Share Facilitation Over Time*

Remember that in a study group, everyone is a learner. This isn't the place for an "expert," but you do need an "organizer" to get things rolling. The only thing worse than a group with an overbearing leader, is a group with no organization or leadership where the members all abdicate responsibility. We've all been a part of well-meaning groups that fall apart from lack of facilitation, so we humbly suggest:

- Plan an introductory meeting to frame the study. Decide how you will organize the study, how many times you will meet, when you will meet, and define what "success" and learning will look like at the end. Make a long-term plan so each meeting connects to the last and the next over time.
- Figure out the organizational feature for the meetings over time: specific chapters, big ideas, guiding question(s), pieces of student work, or a combination of these. Well-defined purpose will help drive the group's engagement.

Once a plan is in place, it is great to rotate facilitation for individual meetings. Identify several “duties” for the meeting facilitator:

- An opening ritual such as a reading or quote that ties to the purpose of the meeting
- A discussion format/protocol for the meeting
- A routine to individually share out and summarize thinking at the end of the meeting to maximize both individual and group accountability such as:
  - ❑ Big take aways/“ah-has,”
  - ❑ How I feel smarter,
  - ❑ Implications for my planning/instruction/assessment,
  - ❑ Risk I’ll take this week in my classroom.
- Create a structure to track the group’s thinking over time and how individuals get smarter. Working toward mastery is a key to human motivation. When group members see how they think and get smarter over time, it helps them engage more, open up more, and take more risks.

### *Create a List of Norms*

Simple expectations that are transparent often make study groups function with greater ease and increase the potential for success. These can be simple and might include ways to invite a tentative member into the conversation, expectations about listening, start and stop times, and a procedure for refocusing. Plan a procedure that is transparent. You might start by saying something like “Let’s decide on a signal to use when we feel the discussion is drifting and then have everyone agree to help stay focused.”

### *Consider Using Protocols*

A structured protocol can help discussions flow and ensure all voices are heard. Check out [www.schoolreforminitiative.org](http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org) for a wide selection of text-based, problem-based, and student work-based protocols.

### *Write Before You Talk and Remember to Build in Time for Reflection*

When people have time to gather their thoughts and reflect in writing, the conversations can get deeper more quickly. Annotate as you read to prepare yourself for a great conversation. Stop from time to time to reflect on what you are learning and how you might make your groups’ interactions more productive by enriching the content or improving the process. Make sure you take time to enjoy one another and celebrate your learning.

### *Take a Risk in Your Classroom*

Reading and talking together is all for naught if there is no payoff for the students in your classroom. Each week that you read and talk, make a commitment to implement a new routine to improve student learning in your classroom—not just once, but over and over until you feel like you have enough data to come back and share hurdles, frustrations, and student successes with your group.

### *Look at Student Work Together*

We can all tell great stories about what happens in our classrooms—but student work is the concrete evidence of learning that matters most. Studying the impact of our planning, instruction, and assessment practice on the quality and content of student thinking is essential to our purpose as educators.

### *Spread the Smarter*

Consider sharing out the learning of your group at a staff meeting. Having a larger purpose and audience for our work helps us engage. Spread the wealth and the “smart.” Structure a learning experience for other colleagues around your group’s learning experience. Share the most compelling excerpts you read, or student work your kids produced as a result of your risk-taking.

### *Ideas for Organizing Your Book Study*

Just as you would organize a unit in your classroom, consider how your group will frame the study of *Comprehension Going Forward* over time. To help you decide, we’ve divided this Study Guide into three different organizational structures for your group to consider. Stick with one, or plan your study with a combination of all three. Go get ‘em!

#### **Organizational Structures**

1. By chapter with compelling questions and a “classroom challenge” to encourage participants to try out ideas, structures, and routines back in their classrooms. Meet again to share the outcomes and dig back into the reading. Repeat. (p. 6)
2. By guiding question with cross-chapter references (p. 27)
3. By topic with cross-chapter connections (p. 31)

Regardless of the structure you use or the chapters you choose to read, we hope you will be inspired to bring your reading into the classroom. Ellin Keene calls us to action with these words:

Teachers are the key and in this era we are called upon to make courageous decisions in classrooms—even decisions that defy conventional wisdom and existing policy. Increasingly, good teaching becomes an act of civil disobedience—at least some of the time. Yet isn't that the way that true change has happened in the world? (37)

So, with these words as your inspiration, and many more to come, gather 'round a freshly wiped table piled high with healthy snacks, and dig in to discussion around *Comprehension Going Forward!*

## Study/Meeting Ideas Organized by Chapter

### Chapter 1: Comprehension Instruction Grows Up

*Ellin Oliver Keene*

1. (From p. 10) Jen, the teacher, has a “burning question” about student reluctance and over-familiarity with the comprehension strategies. She feels that both she and students are going through the motions. What burning questions are nagging at your insides? What risks can you take in your classroom to begin to figure out some answers?
2. (From p. 11) Ellin posits that many teachers begin strategies work by analyzing their own use of them while they read. How many in your group have done this *recently*? Doing your own assignments is one of the quickest ways to revise and reform your curriculum. Have each member of your group bring in a challenging piece of text. Read, annotate, and share how you think about text with a partner. Discuss the implications for your students.
3. (From p. 11) Ellin says one of the ways we know students are increasing their comprehension over time is that they both retain and reapply what they’ve learned. What types of assignments/classroom routines go beyond “retention” of text and truly ask students to apply what they’ve learned in a new context?
4. (From p. 12) Ellin stresses the value of the explicit think-aloud as a model for students. Ask each member of your group to design a think-aloud about the same paragraph of text. Share out each version of the think-aloud and discuss the benefits for students.
5. (From p. 13) What does it look like concretely to get better at reading? What classroom-based evidence matters to tracking this goal over time?
6. (From p. 15) Jen, the teacher, explicitly shares with students her goals for them as readers. Take some time to brainstorm your top five reasons you want students to read. What does it look like if you spend time each week attending to these goals? How does going after these big goals affect how you plan? How you assess?

7. (From pp. 20–24) Study the Outcomes and Dimensions of Understanding Charts on pp. 20–23. Take Ellin’s challenge: Are there any outcomes you don’t believe correlate to deeper understanding? Are there others you would add to the list? What would your classroom look like, sound like, and feel like if your planning, instruction, and assessment were designed around these outcomes and behaviors?
8. **Classroom Challenge** from Ellin: Develop daily routines around the Outcomes and Dimensions of Understanding. For instance, ask students to reflect on how using a strategy helped them understand the text more deeply, wait for the response, and then name the outcome the child has used. Post student thinking on anchor charts around the room so the list of outcomes is *generative*, flexible, and fluid over time. Track the growth in student thinking so you have concrete evidence of your readers growing in knowledge, skill, and understanding over time.

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## Chapter 2: Bring the Joy Back to Reading

*Susan Zimmermann*

1. (From p. 35) Share your “Learning to Read” stories. How many memories of reading are connected to school? How many to home/other experiences? What are the implications for your students?
2. (From p. 36) What do you believe are the purposes of education? How do these purposes relate to how you ask students to spend time each day?
3. (From p. 40) Susan asks us, “What enhances a student’s reading experience? How can we ensure that what we do [in school] makes kids like reading more, not less?” How would you answer Susan? What are the keys to motivation and engagement in reading?
4. (From p. 40) Nancy pushes back on Susan’s thinking a little and inquires, “I have to wonder if avid reading is the goal or is it avid seeking of knowledge, information, and experiences through any means necessary?” What other questions do Susan’s and Nancy’s thoughts inspire?

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5. **Classroom Challenge** from Susan: Susan quotes Malcolm Gladwell's report of the research on expertise, that to acquire mastery and become "experts," we need ten thousand hours of practice at a complex task. Chart the number of minutes per day/class that your students spend reading. Use planning structures to increase the number of minutes over time with an eye on purpose: for students to become avid readers, and seekers of knowledge, information, and experiences.

### Chapter 3: Not So Gradual Release: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades

*Debbie Miller*

1. (From p. 47) Early in her chapter, Debbie writes, "Releasing responsibility to children early and often gives them opportunities right away to practice a strategy, use the language, and think, "Oh, I can do this!" Believing they have what it takes to be successful engages, motivates, and supports them as they work and practice making the link between listening comprehension and using strategies independently in their own reading." Commenting on Debbie's thinking, Steph Harvey writes, "Gradual release is not a linear process, but rather a recursive and dynamic one." What do you think?
2. (From p. 48) Like authors who share their words in print and have to let go of "controlling" their reader's thoughts, how can teachers start to trust their students more to do the work? How can we break the bad habit of doing work *for* our students? What kind of shift must we make? What steps must we take?
3. (From pp. 47–48) Review Debbie's setup of the student worktime. Try to infer the steps Debbie took to plan this lesson. Where did she start? How did she think it through? How can you begin to replicate this pattern more often for the benefit of your students and their time to read, write, and talk to make meaning?
4. (From p. 49) Debbie shares the key to a good minilesson is not just telling students what to do, but showing them how to do it. Share

a recent minilesson that you feel fell flat. Discuss how you could add the how to that lesson to have a greater impact on your learners.

5. (From p. 53) What did Debbie learn about Jacquie today that will help her teach Jacquie better tomorrow? What structures help us collect this kind of powerful evidence of growth from each of our learners on a weekly basis?
6. (From p. 54) Ellin Keene (Ch. 1), Susan Zimmerman (Ch. 2), and now Debbie Miller all implore us help our students slow down and attend to meaning as they read. When Jacquie slowed down, she said, “I never knew this book was funny.” But we’ve also heard stories, of students being asked to “write 5 sticky notes per page” and end up hating it (like Ellin’s own daughter—see Ch. 1). How do we know when some students need to slow down to attend to meaning and others do not? What needs to change in our teaching practice to ensure that *all* learners’ needs are met, and that scaffolding for some does not become a barrier for others?
7. (From p. 55) “Teach the reader, not the reading” is a mantra for all the authors of this book. Go back through the script of Debbie and Jacquie’s conversation. How did Debbie attend to Jacquie more than to the “true meaning” of the text? How can conferring structures help you meet the needs of all the readers in your room?
8. (From p. 56) Debbie implores us to use our time each day to put students in situations where they *apply* strategies instead of *talk* about strategies. What implications does this have for your planning, instruction, or assessment?
9. **Classroom Challenge** from Debbie: Debbie discovered a lot about Jacquie as a learner in a five-minute conference, and also built trust with her for future conversations and learning. This week, give yourself the goal of learning something new about each of the students in your room. (If you have large numbers of students, like 50–150, give yourself two or three weeks to get to all of them!) Hold your thinking in a conferring notebook or binder. Look for trends: patterns of behavior, patterns of confusion and patterns of understanding. Use these notes to target future minilessons, conferences, and text choices.

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10. **Classroom Challenge** from Debbie: Each week as you sit down to plan, ask yourself the questions: What will my students do tomorrow? What will they read? What will they write? What will they talk about? After you have planned this most essential part of the lesson, then back up, and add, “And what do they need me to show them that will help them read with more depth and stamina than they would alone?” There is your minilesson! “Make it,” as Debbie says, “less me and more we.” Over time, track the effect shorter minilessons and extended reading/writing time has on your learners.

### Chapter 4: Fulfilling the Promise of “All Students Can”: Comprehension Strategies as the Verbs of Learning Targets

*Samantha Bennett*

1. (From p. 58) Sam shares that Liza is the queen of structure and routine—what structures/routines pop out at you from the opening of this chapter? What are the key structures/routines that help your students learn better each day? Which of your routines seem to have a huge payoff for student learning? Which routines can you revise to have a stronger impact on the learners in your room?
2. (From p. 59; Appendices A, B, and C) An old adage states, “When you know where you are going, it is easier to get there.” Take a look at Appendices A, B, and C. What steps can you infer Liza takes when she plans? What impact do you notice planning for assessment has on Liza’s instruction? What are the implications for your classroom?
3. (From p. 60) Liza’s use of science journals for students to hold their thinking, observations, lab notes, and research over time replicates what real-world scientists do—DaVinci, Edison, and Darwin to name a few. What structures work best in your classroom to hold student thinking over time so you can chart growth towards and mastery of different knowledge, skills, and understanding goals? What structures help students recognize their own growth over time? What structures do you use to ensure that *each* student gets smarter everyday?

4. (From p. 61) We know *purpose* drives engagement. How do you share the purpose of each day with your students? How do students know *why* they are doing what they are doing on a daily basis?
5. (From p. 61) One of the central themes of this chapter and a message of the entire book is (in Sam's words), "Comprehension strategies do not live in a box, to be doled out to students one at a time. They are the way we make meaning of the world throughout our days of living and learning together. The better we get at naming them, and asking students explicitly to practice them, the more we will break the idea of 'smart' and 'not smart.'" What do you think about this idea?
6. (From p. 64) This chapter is like a "Boot Camp" for Backwards Planning 101. What do you know about backward curriculum design? (For group members interested in extending their knowledge, a parallel study of *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005) would be a great next step).
7. (From p. 73) Sam shares Mike Schmoker's thinking that our current "crisis" in education comes from a failure of will and a lack of courage to focus on what matters *most* for students. Thoughts?
8. (From p. 73) What are your goals for student learning tomorrow? How are these goals nested in your big goals for next week? The next few weeks? The grading period/term? The whole school year? Since a chunk of time will never arrive on a platter . . . when will you make the time for this type of planning?
9. **Classroom Challenge** from Sam: Have a go with writing learning targets for your students and brainstorming the matched assessments *before* instruction begins. Try to balance the knowledge, skills, and understanding targets for a well-rounded, purposeful study of any topic.

## Chapter 5: Building a Better Book Club

*Leslie Blauman*

1. (From p. 84) Throughout this book, authors refer to goals, activities and patterns of behavior that exist in the "real world." Book Clubs

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are one of the main ways adults organize to talk about books—including this study group! As you think about instituting “better” book clubs in your classroom, do a little reflection: What are the features of your own book club that you love? What features of your book club frustrate you? What are the implications for your classroom?

2. (From p. 84) All of the teachers in this book have strong lesson-opening routines. Leslie is no exception. Reread the script from Leslie’s opening routine on p. 84. What do you notice? What do you wonder? What opening routines do you use? How can you strengthen your routines for the benefit of the learners in your room?
3. (From p. 85) Tanny’s comment on Leslie’s read aloud structure brings us back to Ellin’s clarion call for “Civil Disobedience.” How can we focus on what we KNOW works for our learners and trust ourselves more than we trust directives and mandates? How can we use student work and student thinking to help us articulate our beliefs and practices more and defend them less?
4. (From p. 86) What is your definition of scaffolding? Why does scaffolding matter? What other examples of scaffolding do you see Leslie weaving into her instruction? Flip to David Pearson’s thinking about scaffolding in his Coda at the end of this book (Chapter 15, pp. 243–253). Now what are you thinking?
5. (From p. 88) Leslie shares her own journey as a teacher–learner by analyzing her book clubs twenty years ago and today. Using the table below, track the differences in Leslie’s thinking and then do

Author’s Name:	S/he used to think:	Now s/he thinks:	Experience/risk that helped her/him	Implications for me/us? What’s next? How Will I Go Forward?:
Leslie Blauman				
Me				

the same for you. (Later in this study guide, there is a chart that challenges you to do it with all of the authors [see p. 30]).

6. (From p. 89) What professional books are landmark texts for you? What books do you go back to again and again when you need a boost or to be reminded of an idea? Bring in landmark books/passages to share with the members of your study group. Make copies of key passages so people can hang them around their desk to read when they need a burst of inspiration!
7. (From p. 90) Throughout this chapter Leslie defines and articulates her thinking about the use of an anchor text to scaffold and support learning for book clubs. As teachers design their own Book Club units, she also on the challenges teachers to reflect on these questions:
  - How can you harness anchor texts and book clubs to both deepen student understanding *and* help students love to read?
  - What is the purpose of using a novel as an anchor text? What kinds of novels make great anchor texts?
  - What other experiences do readers need over a year?
  - How do you like to spend your time as a reader?
  - How have you changed as a reader/thinker after reading this text?
8. (From p. 93) Leslie describes her role as listener while her students are in their book groups. Analyze the book club scripts she has included in this chapter. What did Leslie learn about her groups today that help her teach them better tomorrow? How do her practices help ensure that each of her readers grows over time?
9. (From p. 94) How do Leslie's Book Club Norms compare to the norms your study group set up at the beginning of this book study? What do you wonder? What are the implications for your classroom?
10. **Classroom Challenge** from Leslie: Leslie holds a strong belief (as do all of the authors of this book) that talk deepens thinking. It doesn't distract. How many minutes of talk did your students have today? What is the teacher's role while the students are talking? Build time to talk about text into your daily practice. Show students how to have a powerful conversation (through modeling, "fishbowl")

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structures with one group in the middle giving it a go, and so on.). Focus on the process of the conversation as much as the product. Teach students how to push each other's thinking without shutting each other down, how to help each other get smarter through dialogue, how to listen closely and follow up, and how to communicate better for the benefit of one and all.

## Chapter 6: Thinking and Talking Our Way Through the Words

*Chryse Hutchins*

1. (From p. 100) Chryse implores us to immediately connect the mini-lesson and the student practice time, much like Debbie did in Chapter 3. Discuss planning structures that help you maximize the amount of time that students practice with a juicy enough model to propel them into their reading.
2. (From p. 101) Chryse stresses the importance of the use of sticky notes, anchor charts, coded text, and response notebooks as a springboard for great discussion, and they are also excellent evidence of student learning. These kinds of formative assessments, used in conjunction with powerful feedback help close the achievement gap. What are all the ways you hold student thinking in order to figure out what students know and can do and what they need next to take leaps as learners?
3. (From p. 103) This page brings to mind an old adage in education: "Reading and writing float on a sea of talk." What do you think? What are the implications for how students spend their classroom time?
4. (From pp. 103–105) As Leslie circulates through the groups, Chryse reports that she is "... scripting their conversations and challenging them to talk more about unanswered questions. She kept notes about what students were discovering." (103) Go back and listen in on the groups' talk on pp. 104–105. What do you learn about the readers in this book club based on their talk? What are some implications for future instruction? We've given it a go with Allen as a model:

Name	What I learned from student talk	Implications for future instruction
Allen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>connecting to the character of Matt—same age as his brother; showing empathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>want to find more character driven books for Allen in the future; want to talk to him in a conference about his connection to characters in other books . . . would he like <i>Danny, Champion of the World</i> by Roald Dahl?</li> </ul>
Jessica		
Alex		
Jeff		
Mary		

5. **Classroom Challenge** from Chryse: Go back through the chapter and look for evidence of Leslie’s classroom routines. What does she do *every day*, no matter what? What can you infer about her planning routines? Her instructional routines? Her assessment routines? Now put your own practice in the spotlight: What do you ask students to do every day, no matter the content of the day? What routines do you want to do more often for a bigger impact on your students? What patterns of planning do you want to attend to regularly? Patterns of instruction? Patterns of assessment?
6. **Classroom Challenge** from Chryse: Put kids in groups (with a good minilesson that models behaviors that lead to a powerful conversation and a compelling reason to talk) and *let them go*. While they talk, you listen. Create a chart like the one above with the goal of learning at least one new thing about ten of your students. Share the chart with the students after they talk and name the smart things you heard them say and do. Use the chart to plan a minilesson the next day. What patterns did you notice? What do students need next? OK, ready, go!

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## Chapter 7: Comprehension to What End?

*Stephanie Harvey*

1. (From p. 114) How would you answer Steph's question, "Comprehension, to what end?" What do you believe about the purpose of comprehension strategies?
2. (From p. 115) What is the content/process balance in your classroom? How does this connect with the balance of types of learning targets Sam emphasizes in Chapter 4?
3. (From p. 116) Steph writes, "Strategy instruction is useful only insofar as it leads our kids to better understand the text, the world, and themselves so they can gain insight and even anticipate hurdles and solve pressing problems." With strategies as a starting point, instead of an ending point, what are the implications for how teachers plan? What are the organizing features of your curriculum? What makes curriculum compelling?
4. (From p. 118) Study the Comprehension Continuum chart on p. 118. Steph reminds us again and again that comprehension is not a linear process, but a recursive, dynamic one. Think about a recent unit you've completed with students. How/where did parts of the continuum come into play? How could you enrich your study with more attention to the continuum?
5. (From p. 119) With Steph's description of best practice instruction as the "catch and release" of a fly fisherman, what are the implications for your planning? For your instruction? For your assessment?
6. (From p. 125) A theme that resonates throughout the entire book is the cyclical nature of thinking strategies. We are never "finished" using strategies to make meaning. Texts change, content changes, goals change, but the tools to make meaning stay the same. What cycles are present in your personal life? In your professional life? What can you learn from these cycles that will help you students learn better, and be better human beings?
7. **Classroom Challenge** from Steph: Plan an upcoming unit and begin with the questions: Why does this matter? How will knowing this topic deeply help my students take action in the world? How can I ask my students to replicate the thinking patterns of scien-

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tists, historians, city planners, anthropologists, or lepidopterists? What are the implications for the type of texts I ask my students to read and how they share out what they learn with real purpose and an authentic audience? Move towards students putting their knowledge to work more often.

## Chapter 8: History Lessons

*Anne Goudvis and Brad Buhrow*

1. (From pp. 129–130) Brad and Anne write, “If students are to become knowledgeable, thoughtful citizens, they need to engage in conversations, discussions and debates about events past and present, understand people with different perspectives and opinions, and read widely to become informed about ideas and issues that affect their nation and their world.” This thinking resonates throughout the book, particularly in Steph’s chapter as well as Marjorie’s. This takes us back to the question: How do historians/social scientists/politicians/social activists/lobbyists/journalists/humanitarians in the real world spend their time? How can our social studies classrooms replicate these patterns of behavior? What would our classrooms look like if this were the norm?
2. (From p. 143) Expand your notion of *text*. What do historians read to try to make sense of an event for which they were not present?
3. (Throughout the chapter) Ask each study group members to bring in an artifact that has significance to an historical event (painting, drawing, letter, first hand account, advertisements, photographs, journal entries). Practice kicking off a unit by using the thinking strategies to *read* the artifact with lists of: What we notice/What we wonder. Brainstorm/search for follow up texts that could support the study and keep students thinking like historians. Plan a unit together: What would this unit look like over time? Two weeks? A month? A quarter? What will students create to demonstrate their understanding of the topic?
4. (From p. 143) Brainstorm a list of resources in your community that could offer students real-world experiences and access to experts that are in the field. Local library branches and parent

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communities are filled with experts in a variety of fields. Put a note out in your next Classroom Update Letter/email asking parents if they have any special expertise/knowledge/connections for your next classroom study.

5. **Classroom Challenge** from Anne and Brad: Brad and Anne offer several suggestions for powerful, compelling, learning-filled units. Ways to frame a study for maximum student engagement are listed below. Choose one and have a go!
- Starting with what students already know about a topic
  - Framing a topic in a big question that drives inquiry
  - Exposure to a wide variety of texts/viewpoints on one topic to build background knowledge and serve as models for final products
  - Framing the unit in a case study
  - Beginning with the end in mind: What will students create that will replicate what historians, and so on, create in the real world?

## Chapter 9: Comprehension in Science

*Gina Cervetti*

1. (From p. 151) Gina writes, “. . . students should learn to comprehend science texts in science, and they should put reading and writing to work as they engage in investigations.” What are the ways you ask students to replicate the behavior of scientists in the world? What do scientists read? What do they write? How do they spend their time? What are the implications for your classroom?
2. (From p. 152) Brainstorm a list of texts you read on a weekly and monthly basis. How many are fiction? How many are nonfiction? What are the implications for your classroom?
3. (From p. 152) Embark on a “reading time and type audit.” Go through your school’s schedule and add up how many hours per week students in each grade read in every discipline throughout the day. Add up the hours per week. List the types and length of texts students read each week. Compile some data. Discuss the implications for your learners.

4. (From p. 155) If we know purpose drives engagement, how do we share with students *why* the science they are studying matters? How will it make them more powerful human beings?
5. (From p. 157) Add some thinking to Gina’s plea to have students read *in* science more than we have them read *about* science. Brainstorm/search for texts that would meet her criteria.
6. (From p. 161) Share your thinking about the final line of the chapter, “Given the importance of knowledge building for reading, the continuation [the assumption that reading instruction is both more important than and distinct from science] can only mean that reading instruction will ultimately suffer from its position of curricular prominence in isolation from subject matter instruction.”
7. **Classroom Challenge** from Gina: Plan a unit that for students to gain knowledge, skills, and understanding in science by reading a variety of scientific texts, observing the science phenomena around them, interviewing experts, and replicating the behaviors of scientists throughout time. Brainstorm the explicit knowledge, skills, and understanding you want students to walk away with after an in-depth study of . . . plants? Rocks? Insects? The human body? Take a look at the Learning Target–Assessment Match Planning document (Appendix A) in Chapter 4 as a model.

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## Chapter 10: What High School Students Remember About Strategy Instruction

*Marjorie Lerner*

1. (From p. 164) Marjorie shares her urgent search for “what is essential” in this time of mandates and directives “from above.” What burning questions, about kids, curriculum, and/or life at school keep you up at night?
2. (From p. 165) The comprehension strategies have “sustained” Marjorie through a professional lifetime of trends, fads, tips, and tricks. What practices are “non-negotiable” for you on a daily basis? What practices would you “die on a hill” for?

3. (From p. 165) What “understandings” do you think your students will take away from your class and remember ten years from now? What learning do you think will stick? What learning has “stuck” from your K–12 school experience? Why?
4. (From p. 165) Where does “real world purpose” live in your classroom? Why does real world purpose matter? What does real world purpose look like?
5. (From p. 167) What do you hope your students will remember about you ten years from now? How do you “teach who you are?”
6. (From p. 167) As shared by the teachers in Ellin’s Ch. 1, Marjorie noticed that when we ask students to slow down and attend to their metacognition as readers—*our* timing is essential. We don’t want to interrupt students who are as Olive says, “Creating a world in their minds” as they read, but we also know that every reader can get better, and every student deserves at least a year of growth after spending a year in our classroom. What is the “right” balance of explicit strategy instruction and allowing readers to get lost in a book? How do we help all readers get smarter and tackle more difficult texts over time?
7. (From p. 168) How does your life as a reader influence how you teach reading?
8. (From p. 168) How do you ask your students to “read the world” as Paolo Friere suggests?
9. (From p. 168) What do Marjorie’s findings say about “Teach the reader, not the reading.” What are the implications for your classroom?
10. **Classroom Challenge** from Marjorie: Marjorie implores us to “focus on thinking that matters to our students’ development as human beings and citizens.” Analyze your current unit. What are the “real world” links in content or process? How are you asking students to take on the *behaviors* and *products* of citizens, readers, writers, mathematicians, scientists, and historians in the real world? Design a unit that includes a real-world purpose and audience.

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## Chapter 11: It's Not too Late to be Smart: The Hope and How of Secondary Strategies Instruction

*Cris Tovani*

1. (From p. 175) Cris kicks off her chapter by sharing conversations she has with individual readers about their process. This careful attention to each student is at the core of Cris' practice. What are the varieties of ways you know what each student knows and can do on a daily/weekly/monthly basis without waiting for a standardized test to "tell" you? How can you increase the ways to know over time?
2. (From p. 178) Knowing that if you have twenty-five students in your class, you probably have twenty-five different reading "levels" how might you increase choice and opportunity to read a variety of text in your classroom each day?
3. (From p. 178) Consider the students in your classroom. Focus on your reluctant readers. Instead of blaming or making excuses for why they don't/won't read, take their reluctance seriously and re-frame your thinking. What do they need to dig into a text? If you are stuck, discuss, what do *you* need to really "dig in" to a text? What are the implications for your classroom?
4. (From p. 179) What does a year of growth look like for *every* student?
5. (From p. 182) How, when, where, and why should you share your "reading life" with students?
6. (From p. 185) What does the phrase "all students can learn" mean to you? How do we ensure this isn't a cliché in our classrooms/schools?
7. (From p. 185) Cris has this quote from Carol Dweck hanging over her white board, "Smart isn't something you have. Smart is something you get." What does this quote mean to you?
8. **Classroom Challenge** from Cris: Make a list of students in your classroom. What do you know about each student as a person? As a learner—how their brains work? What does a "just right" text look for each of them? In terms of content? In terms of level? What are

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the implications for what each student needs *next* to ensure a year of growth as a reader? Learn something new about five students every day. Over a week, look for trends and reflect on the implications for your planning and instruction.

9. **Classroom Challenge** from Cris: Take a “reading inventory” of one week of your instruction. List every text you ask students to read over the next week: every quote, political cartoon, textbook paragraph, newspaper article, commentary, op/ed, novel chapter, essay, and so on. Knowing choice drives engagement, and that every state’s standards guide says, “Students will read a variety of texts/genres over time” how can you increase the choice and variety of texts you ask students to read next week?

## Chapter 12: Meaning is Everything: Comprehension Work with English Language Learners

*Nancy Commins*

1. (From p. 192) Do a little role-play. You are dropped into a classroom in a foreign land and expected to both learn the language and gain academic knowledge and skills. What will you need in the first few months? What will you need over time? What are the implications for your classroom/school?
2. (From p. 193) What do you believe English Language Learners need most? What are the implications for your classroom?
3. This chapter is full of compelling quotes. Choose one of the quotes below, or any quote that jumps out at you and grabs you by the jugular, to start a discussion:
  - a. “When students are reading in their primary language, text acts as a doorway to meaning and new information; however, for students learning to read in a second language, meaning is the key that unlocks the door to comprehending the text.” (p. 194)
  - b. “. . . all anyone cares about is that their scores are low and (worse) they are making the school look bad. It is the children who are stigmatized and not the kind of instruction they have received.” (p. 195)

- c. “An asset orientation recognizes that second language learners arrive at school with the essential fund of language that English speakers come with, encoded in their primary language. It values students’ language and culture as a foundation upon which to develop concepts, literacy and higher order thinking skills and affirms that students actually do know a lot.”
- d. What other sentences from this text jump out at you?
4. (From p. 194) What does it mean to know a student deeply? What are the implications for your classroom?
5. (From p. 196) Draw and share your own concept map of the Conceptual Reservoir for second language learners. Consider what you would need to learn academic information in a foreign land. What do you believe second language learners need most? What are the implications for your classroom?
6. Take Nancy’s challenge: try to make meaning of the Hebrew on pages 203–205. What did you figure out? What are the implications for your classroom?
7. **Classroom Challenge** from Nancy: Think about the physical space of your classroom. How do your walls help support the conceptual development of ideas and promote thinking? Take pictures of your space to bring to the study group. What do your walls say about what you value? How do your walls give students more access to the curriculum? More support to engage in complex thought? More scaffolding to support their extended thinking and growth over time? Nancy asks you to consider how your walls communicate in text and in pictures:
- the topic students are wrestling with?
  - scaffolds to help them work independently?
  - models of student thinking and high quality student work?

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## Chapter 13: Comprehension Strategy Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

*Anne Upczak Garcia*

1. (From p. 217) Anne’s call to privilege acculturation over assimilation takes us all the way back to Chapter 1 and Ellin’s call for civil

disobedience against mandates and practices that make no sense for the children in our educational care. What beliefs can you infer drive Anne's practice in the classroom? What beliefs drive your daily practice?

2. (From p. 219) Anne lists several routines that she believes are essential for student learning. Compare Anne's list of routines to Leslie's list of routines for her book clubs in Chapter 5. What connections do you notice? Any connections to your own classroom non-negotiables?
3. (From p. 219) Anne writes, "The idea of integrated units isn't to compromise the core of a subject area, but to enhance it." Co-authors Ellin, Sam, Anne and Brad, Steph, and Gina (and probably most others) would agree. Do you? Discuss.
4. (From p. 220) What would Gina (Chapter 9) say about Anne's guiding questions? Where do the big ideas about weather—as a scientific phenomenon—live in this study? What concrete knowledge and skills related to weather will students walk away with? What texts might students read in the discipline of weather vs. "about" weather?
5. (From p. 227) Anne is so clear and purposeful to make sure that her practices reflect her beliefs. What does Anne believe are the keys to motivation and engagement for her learners? What fills her days with joy? What are the keys to student learning in Anne's classroom? What are the implications for the learners in your classroom?
6. **Classroom Challenge** from Anne: If you are teaching a lesson on how to read for meaning, why not do it using a content rich text? With ELL/CLD students you may have to preview vocabulary, use images to support ideas and language, provide them with language frames to structure their answers both orally and in writing—but still teach them how to read for meaning.

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## Ch. 14: Thinking Through the Day

*Tanny McGregor*

1. (From p. 230) Tanny writes, ". . . we had witnessed the evolution from a culture of assigning and assessing to a culture of thinking."

What do you think about this cultural shift? How would you describe the “culture” of your classroom? In your school?

2. (From p. 230) For the poets in your study group—Tanny offers a metaphor of the daily schedule as skeletal structure and thinking strategies as musculature. What other metaphors help you define and describe how thinking strategies support student learning over time?
3. (From p. 233) In the spirit of the importance of doing your own assignment, take Tanny’s suggestion and brainstorm a tagline for your classroom. What thinking processes did you have to go through to come up with it? Share it. Get some feedback. Try it out with kids.
4. (From p. 234) Morning/beginning of class routines are an essential part of every teacher and student’s day. Brainstorm and share routines that help your learners think throughout the day.
5. (From p. 242) Tanny writes, “Comprehension is not about subjects or category labels. Comprehension is about fascinating thinking, derived from reading, writing, talking, and (just as any musician will tell you) a whole lot of practice. With opportunities for these lavished across the school day, our students will begin to think deeply and courageously. *Sapere aude!*” What do you think?
6. **Classroom Challenge** from Tanny: Think about your typical routine. Think about how many opportunities your students have to practice the concept of *sapere aude*, courageous thinking. Provide them every chance you can to talk, question, reflect, connect, infer, visualize, synthesize, and talk some more. Use all of those places in the day to allow kids every chance to make meaning of their learning lives.

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## Chapter 15: Toward the Next Generation of Comprehension Instruction: A Coda

*P. David Pearson*

Pearson offers his own synthesis of *Comprehension Going Forward* and categorizes the authors’ main points into five central topics. These topics would

be another powerful lens through which to read the book. Pearson highlights these central ideas:

1. Teaching Comprehension Is a Moral Enterprise
2. Comprehension Instruction Begins and Ends in the Hearts and Minds of Students
3. Reading to Learn Is Always a Part of Learning to Read
4. Comprehension Is as Dependent on Affect as It Is on Cognition
5. Scaffolding is the Central Instructional Metaphor in Guiding Students Along the Path of Independence

These ideas are powerful discussion topics in and of themselves. The group could agree to meet five times, each time tackling one of Pearson's big ideas, and participants could read any chapter to add to Pearson's thinking—and enrich their own teaching brains and hearts. *Sapere aude!*

## Study/Meeting Ideas Organized by Guiding Questions (GQ)

### GQ: Who am I as a reader?

*Chapter Connections:* Introduction and any Chapter 1–15

1. Frame study by reading Smokey Daniel’s introduction together.
2. Make a plan to bring in a piece of text that challenged you as a reader (fiction, nonfiction, magazine articles, instructions, recipes, newspaper articles, and so on.).
3. Do a quick “text walk” of the excerpts available, and let group members choose which they will read and annotate
4. Read and annotate texts
5. Share annotations with a partner—what did you figure out about yourself as a reader?
6. Whole group: What did you figure out? What are the implications for reading instruction, planning, or assessment in your classroom?
7. End with a whip around: based on what you figured out, what risks will you take the following week to teach your readers better?
8. Everyone choose which chapter of *Comprehension Going Forward* they will dig into next.

### GQ: The Goldilocks Principal: How Much Explicit Instruction is “Just Right?”

*Chapter Connections:* Ch. 3 Debbie Miller; Ch. 4 Samantha Bennett; Ch. 5 Leslie Blauman; Ch. 7 Stephanie Harvey; Ch. 8 Anne Goudvis and Brad Burhow; Ch. 10 Marjorie Larner; Ch. 11 Cris Tovani; Ch. 13 Anne Upczak Garcia; Ch. 15 P. David Pearson

If your group wants to read before they come together, see Option 1 (p. 28).  
If they want to use part of the meeting time to read, see Option 2 (p. 28).

**Option 1:** Participants read one chapter *before* they come together to discuss

**Before the study group meeting:**

1. Before the group meets: Facilitator sends out an email with the guiding question: “How much explicit instruction is just right?” Ask study group participants to email their initial thinking to the facilitator.
2. Study group participants choose which chapter they’d like to read to try to get smarter about the guiding question. Everyone agrees to read and annotate their chapter *before* coming together as a group to talk.

**During the study group meeting:**

1. Facilitator opens the meeting by sharing the original responses to the guiding question from the email request on anchor chart:  
 “How much explicit instruction is ‘just right?’”

Before we read we thought: (responses from email)	Now we’re thinking:	Risk we’ll take in the classroom next week to get even smarter:
•	•	•

2. Group members share quotes/thinking from the chapter they read that helped change or expand their original thinking
  - a. whip around or popcorn, but make sure all group members get to share
  - b. remember to direct group members to text that changed/ inspired your thinking
3. Time to write: What ideas discussed today struck you? What are you taking away? What risk might you take in your classroom this week as a result of this discussion?

4. Share out: Each member of the group shares their take away and the risk they'll take in the next week.
5. Make plan/set goal/purpose for next meeting: What chapters will we read next?

**Option 2:** Participants read during the meeting time: 10 minutes to set purpose; 20 minutes to read; 25 minutes to talk; 5 minutes to debrief and set purpose for next meeting.

**GQ: How can I work toward my beliefs matching my practices?**

- Chose any chapter. Based on the author's writing what can you infer about her/his beliefs about the purpose of education?
- What practices did she write about that tie to those beliefs?
- Analyze charts after you read . . . what are the implications for your planning, instruction, or assessment practices?

Author/Teacher's Name	Beliefs about Education:	Practices That Match Those Beliefs:
Leslie Blauman	The purpose of education is to:	
Anne Upczak Garcia	The purpose of education is to:	
Cris Tovani	The purpose of education is to:	
Your Name Here	The purpose of education is to:	

### GQ: Then and Now: How Did My Favorite Authors Get Smarter Over Time?

Many authors in this book share how their thinking has changed and evolved over the years. This might be a compelling lens/reason to read for your study group. Feel free to use the chart below to track your thinking over time.

Author's Name	S/he used to think:	Now s/he thinks:	Experience/risk that helped her/him get smarter:	Implications for me/us:

## Study/Meeting Ideas Organized by Compelling Topic with Cross-Chapter Connections

**Slow Reading:** Ellin (Ch. 1), Susan (Ch. 2), Debbie (Ch. 3), and Marjorie (Ch. 10) all explicitly name the importance of “slow reading” in our fast-paced culture. This phenomenon is represented many places in our current culture with the “Slow Food” and “Do It Yourself” movements that have surfaced in recent years. What do you think about this proposition and how might it affect how you spend time with students each day? How you plan? How you assess?

**Maximize the Number of Minutes Students Read, Write, and Talk Each Day:** Debbie (Ch. 3), Sam (Ch. 4), Gina (Ch. 9), and Tanny (Ch. 14) all propose that increasing the amount of time students read, write, and talk each day will directly affect how much “smarter” and “better” students get over time. Track the number of minutes per day/class period (or better yet, invite a colleague in to track for you!) that your students spend reading, writing, and talking each day. Analyze the data and discuss the implications of going after the goal of maximizing the time students spend doing the “doing” in your classrooms schoolwide.

**Teachers As Social Activists: It is Time for Civil Disobedience:** Ellin (Ch. 1), Susan (Ch. 2), Steph (Ch. 7), Marjorie (Ch. 10), and Nancy (Ch. 12) all make reference to teachers being agents of change in the climate of testing and “accountability.” How do you feel about their call to “civil disobedience?”

**Comprehension in Science Study:** Chapters 4, 8, and 13 all use specific science content to illustrate their main ideas. Chapters 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 illustrate the importance of thinking and reading with explicit content in mind.

**Assessment:** Structures, systems, and ideas for formative assessment and coming to know readers/learners deeply are specifically referenced in Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13.

**Comprehension in Secondary Classrooms:** Secondary classrooms are highlighted specifically in Chapters 1, 4, 10, and 11.



**Samantha Bennett** is also the author of *That Workshop Book: New Systems and Structures for Classrooms That Read, Write, and Think* (2007. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann).