

***Text Savvy Study Guide***  
by Maria Cassiani Iams and Sarah Daunis

### Introduction

1. What structures do you have in place in order to effectively support your students as readers? If you use the Workshop model in your classroom, how have you found that it supports your readers?
2. For the upper-grade elementary student, the reading focus is on comprehension and structural analysis – they have to move beyond decoding to reading to learn. What does this work look like in your classroom?
3. In the introduction, the authors reflect on their students’ learning: “It was not as if my kids weren’t mastering the skills taught within a unit. The question was: Why they weren’t bringing their prior knowledge to the next unit of study? Why weren’t they building skills upon skills from unit to unit?”  
  
In your experience, have you witnessed this as well? Why do you think this “compartmentalized” learning occurs? Have you noticed it in other content areas besides reading?
4. In the “Final Notes,” the authors argue that teachers and students need to co-create meaning. What does that statement mean to you? What are the advantages of co-creating meaning? Are there disadvantages?
5. Jot down your daily schedule. Where could weekly shared reading fit into your already busy day?

### Chapter 1

#### A Structure of Support of Upper-Grade Readers

1. As an upper grades teacher, do you engage students in shared reading instruction? When? How? Why?
2. At the beginning of this chapter, the authors relay how weekly shared reading grew out of observations and analysis of student work. What do you do with your newfound knowledge about your students? How do you incorporate your findings into your future instruction?
3. In the section, “Text Selection for Weekly Shared Reading,” the authors suggest a monthly cycle of nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and “other.” In third grade, the authors noted that the third grade readers benefited from two weeks per month of

- nonfiction texts. This decision was determined by the readers' needs. Thinking about your students, what would your monthly cycle of texts look like, and why?
4. In order to implement weekly shared reading in your classroom, you'll need to find grade appropriate texts. What does that look like when you have kids at various reading levels? Where do you think you'll find the texts? How will you gather and organize these texts?
  5. What does it mean when the authors say they wanted "the same level of success with all of our units of study?" How is that possible? What would that look like?
  6. Camilla and Evan, the two fifth graders profiled in Chapter 1, produced amazing pieces of poetry writing during the Poetry Unit in April. How do you see weekly shared reading supporting your *writing* units of study, even though your daily instruction with weekly shared reading focuses on reading skills?

## Chapter Two

### Five Essential Reading Skills Used by Proficient Readers

1. This chapter profiles Tringa, an English Language Learner who reads grade-level text proficiently, yet comprehends on a literal level. Does Tringa remind you of a student in your classroom or school building? How are you currently supporting this student's growth as a reader in your classroom? What concerns you about this student's reading skills?
2. The authors suggest there are "five essential reading skills" that proficient readers consistently use. Turn to a page in *Text Savvy* and read it, thinking about the skills that you employ as a proficient reader. Can you name them for yourself? How challenging did you find it to be metacognitive about your thinking? Why or why not?
3. How is *previewing the text and having expectations* different from asking students to "make predictions while reading?"
4. The strategies of *activating prior knowledge* and *making connections* support the reading skill of *locating oneself in the text*. While these two strategies are key for all readers, they are crucial for English Language Learners. How do you ensure that your English Language Learners have many opportunities to engage in these behaviors?
5. In their experiences, the authors often see a "comprehension breakdown" when students can't envision the story, idea, or abstract concept from the text. The authors notice that students who have not *filled in the picture* have true difficulty in inferring big ideas from the text and synthesizing the entire piece. Would you

say this to be true in your experience as well? If so, what would be your next steps with these struggling students?

6. What structures that support accountable talk do you have in place in your classroom? How did you put these structures in place?
7. In this chapter, the authors point out that they'd observed, ". . . strong readers go from understanding a realistic fiction text to struggling through a historical fiction text on the same reading level." Does this dilemma ring true for you? If so, how have you addressed it?
8. Review Tringa's responses in Chapter Two. Talk about her growth – how did this structure support her proficiency as a reader?

### Chapter Three

#### Weekly Shared Reading: A Day-by-Day Account

1. Look at the box at the end of Monday's section (page 34). In it, there's an example of what students might say when asked to preview the text and have expectations. Look at the other quotes throughout Monday's section. Which could you imagine hearing in your own classroom? Which seem unfamiliar?
2. Read over Tuesday's section (starting on page 34). What teaching moves did Wendy make as she worked through this text with her students?
3. In this chapter, you were invited to be a fly on the wall in Wendy's classroom. As a result, you were able to see how weekly shared reading played out over the course of a week. What are your thoughts? Questions?
4. The authors highlighted working through a nonfiction text in Chapter Three.
  - a. Select another genre – a poem, a historical document, an excerpt from a read aloud, a test prep page, etc. with your students' strengths and needs in mind.
  - b. Using Chapters 1 – 3 as your guide, plan the five days of weekly shared reading with your selected text.
  - c. Reflect on your planning.
    - What seemed comfortable?
    - What was challenging?
    - What more support do you need – and how might you receive it?

### Chapter Four

#### Assessment

1. In this chapter, the authors argue that the weekly shared reading structure ". . . allows for a more public demonstration of their reading strategies, thereby enabling (the teacher) to more thoughtfully support them as they move toward

- independence.” How do you foresee this structure moving your students toward independence?
2. “Assessing-on-the-run” allows teachers to check in with more students in a shorter amount of time, to reflect on instruction in the moment. There is no way, though, that you can effectively reach all of your students during this 10-15 minute block. How would you pick and choose? Whose conversations would you listen in to? Why? How would your assessment choices shift over the course of a week? A month?
  4. Through this structure, the teacher is afforded the opportunity to extend the “With” in the “To-With-By” model. Do you think this is a smart teaching move? Why? Why not?
  5. In schools throughout the country, the conversation is about student data. Whether the data is formal (standardized tests) or informal (anecdotal notes), data is just a set of numbers or a bunch of words unless we use it to inform our instruction. In Chapter 4, the authors give suggestions for capturing data on students. Think about how this would look in your classroom – what information would you collect about your readers? How would you collect it in a timely yet purposeful way? When would you review the information? What would you then do with the data?

## Chapter Five

### Supporting Struggling Readers

1. “When students read, their reading and thinking work is invisible” (p. 68).
  - a. How do you gain insight into your students’ reading and thinking skills?
  - b. If you encourage your students to respond to their reading in writing, how do you assess their reading responses?
2. Think about the struggling readers in your classroom or school building.
  - a. What current supports are offered for those struggling readers?
  - b. Who provides the interventions?
  - c. How often are struggling students assessed or progress monitored, and by what system?
  - d. Finally, are the supports and interventions helping those readers meet grade-level expectations?
3. Think of a particular child in your classroom who needs additional reading support. What are the overarching needs of this reader? How could you see weekly shared reading supporting him/her?
4. Week Four – in the weekly shared reading model – is set aside; it’s an “extra” week, one where you can focus on whatever genre your students need to spend

more time with. Considering the students in your class, particularly those struggling readers, what do you think you'll be looking at during Week Four?

5. The authors listed a number of ways in which weekly shared reading benefited the three struggling readers described in Chapter Five. Are there other ones you can think of? What would be your next steps (if these were your students)?

## Chapter Six Cross-Curricular Reading

1. In this chapter, the authors argue that weekly shared reading can be used to support other content-areas too – in particular, Social Studies, Science and Math. What types of texts would you envision using?
2. Oftentimes, when we plan our social studies or science units of study, we find texts that are too high-level for our students. What have you done in your social studies or science planning to combat this issue?
3. The authors note, “Our kids weren’t truly synthesizing while reading in a variety of genres, and our instruction of the strategies to support synthesizing was not solidly grounded in a context that made sense to our readers.” In response, the teachers responded in a variety of ways – more explicit modeling, shorter texts, etc. Do these choices make sense to you? Would you have tried other strategies?
4. Are there other subject areas that you might consider? Music? Art? Theater? What would *that* work look like?

## Chapter Seven Test Preparation

1. Think about your current reading test preparation, either in your own classroom or school-wide.
  - a. How does it flow with your other units of study in reading and writing?
  - b. What opportunities do students have to practice their reading-for-a-test and test-taking skills?
  - c. How could your current reading test preparation curriculum meet more students’ needs?
2. The authors reflect on using weekly shared reading to support test preparation:

*“As I select texts to use for weekly shared reading, I think about what I know about standardized reading tests and make smart choices about the kinds of texts I share with my students,”* (p. 88).

- What do you know about standardized reading tests? What kinds of texts would you share with your students?
3. Instead of modeling the use of a reading test passage during weekly shared reading, the authors chose to model the use of a math test passage. Why do you suppose they made this choice? Can you envision how weekly shared reading could support test preparation in math, social studies, and science?
  4. Jennifer's past assessments allowed her to predict what her students would struggle with when it came to standardized tests. Considering what you know about your students from past assessments, what are their overarching needs as test-takers?
  5. Review the Day-by-Day account. Talk about Jennifer's students and their growth – how did this structure support their proficiency as readers of standardized tests? What teaching moves did we make in order to support them?
  6. Return to Jennifer's Ongoing Reflection. What stood out for you? What will you take away with you?

## Chapter Eight

### Anecdotes and Reflections from the Field: Empowering Students to Find Their Own Voices

1. While weekly shared reading supports skill development in upper grade readers, it also helps mold an intentional classroom community where all voices are heard and honored. In your classroom, how are you currently creating an intentional classroom community? What opportunities do students have to share their ideas in a safe and supportive environment?
2. Knowledge is constructed socially, ideally in conditions that support learning. How does weekly shared reading provide an opportunity for the social construction of knowledge?
3. When the authors wrote, "I show my students how to use what was taught during weekly shared reading in their independent work," how did you envision that playing out in Reading Workshop? In Writing Workshop?
4. We have all had students whose "voices are clear from the moment they walk in." We've also encountered students who have had "unheard voices." Think back to those various students in your class. How do you think the weekly shared reading structure can support and empower all of them?

5. Read over the transcribed conversation about the article, “An Immigrant Nation.” What stood out for you? What surprised you? What did you think of Sarah’s role in this conversation? The students’ role in this conversation? Were any of the students similar to ones in your own classroom?
7. What did you think about Sarah’s realizations after her conversation with Anthony? Have there been times when you’ve found yourself overcoming assumptions?
8. Share your thoughts about the following quote: “While I might not agree with those dominant values, I need to remember that I should give all my students the opportunity to have equal footing within the classroom. I need to ask myself, How can I provide *all of my students* access to the dominant cultural values?”

## Chapter Nine

### A Schoolwide Initiative: Beyond My Classroom to Our Collaborative Work

1. A Professional Learning Community describes a collegial group of administrators and school staff who collaborate, inquire, and work together to ensure learning for all students. Would you consider your school community to be a Professional Learning Community? Why or why not?
2. Because the authors were part of a Professional Learning Community at PS 59, they were able to pursue professional inquiry – to ask questions, to take action, and to publicly reflect. Have you had a similar experience in your teaching career? What were the attributes of the Professional Learning Community that allowed for your professional inquiry?
3. What kinds of professional inquiry would you like to pursue? What would you need to do to make it happen?
4. If you are in the midst of a professional inquiry, what are you currently pursuing? How is it working out? What are you most proud of? What would you change?
5. What structures are in place in your classroom and school that facilitate reflection of student work, encourage you to explore, and deepen your own practice? What does that look like? Book Clubs? Videotaping? Etc.?