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A Professional Development Program to Improve Reading Comprehension for Secondary Students

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A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Teaching.

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DEDICATION

To my husband, John, who supported me tirelessly in my journey. Thank for your encouragement when I was tired and frustrated, your empathy when I hit stumbling blocks, and your cheers when I was victorious. You expressed your love and belief in me every day. Your support made this work possible and I dedicate this project to you.
ABSTRACT


The goal of the literature review and project was to help secondary students improve reading proficiency by identifying influential instructional practice and creating a systematic professional development. The literature review revealed four influential themes that became the pillars of a systematic professional development to be implemented over a three-year period and provide secondary teachers with direct and explicit reading comprehension strategy instruction. Themes were as follows: students need reading comprehension strategy instruction (RCSI) in the content area secondary classroom to learn how to comprehend complex text, teachers need to use direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence in order for the strategy instruction to be effective, students need to frequently use complex text as their main source of learning in the disciplinary classroom, and teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development with the use of coaches in order to successfully instruct reading comprehension strategies. Students also need to have declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of a strategy in order to independently use strategies for improving comprehension. The professional development is divided into four segments: pre-work, workshop for teachers and administrators, coaching and collaboration, and post-work to measure the program’s efficacy. The project includes activity descriptions, templates, surveys, presentations, assessments, and coaching training materials needed for the PD implementation.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Capstone Question

I began this journey looking for ways to improve reading comprehension for secondary students. Chapter One describes that journey and the factors that led the crafting of this capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* This chapter outlines my rationale for the question, provides the context and how my question relates to my district, and clarifies my current literacy philosophy. The chapter also explains how this capstone benefits and influences stakeholders including secondary students and their families, teachers, administrators, and my own teaching practice. This capstone uncovered highly effective instructional practices which influence reading comprehension for secondary students. These themes became the pillars of a systematic professional development that would be implemented over a three-year period and provide teachers with direct and explicit reading comprehension strategy instruction and improvement for reading comprehension proficiency for their secondary students.

My Journey

I have been a teacher for seven years and have been teaching in my current district for four years. According to the Department of Education (DOE, 2019) report, 39% percent of tenth-grade students in my current district did not meet grade-level standards for reading. This percentage represents too many students being sent off to a reading
specialist. It represents a lack of effective literacy instructional practice schoolwide, depriving reading proficiency for two out of every five students seated in the classroom. This number reflects a serious problem as articulated by blogger Gunn (n.d.):

> When a person struggles with reading, the social impacts are profound. A person who is unable to read may have low self-esteem or feel emotions such as shame, fear, and powerlessness. Students who struggle with literacy feel ostracized from academia, avoid situations where they may be discovered or find themselves unable to fully participate in society or government. (Gunn, n.d., para. 5)

I was a student who struggled with reading comprehension my entire school career, and blogger Gunn accurately described how I felt about myself and how 39% of the tenth graders in my school must feel. This section tells my journey of low proficiency as an early-reader and high school reader and reviews my professional experience in literacy and observing reading literacy in my district.

**My Early-Reader Experience**

I grew up in a small, rural town in the upper Midwest where my father read the same Dr. Seuss books to me every night. Through this repetition, I was able to memorize many of the stories verbatim. When I was asked to read back to him, he and my mother mistook my memorization for actual reading. Because of this misconception, I was placed in an advanced reading group entering kindergarten with other students who already knew how to read. The kindergarteners participating in the program did not practice reading or receive pre-literacy lessons, such as phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, spelling, decoding words, and reading comprehension. Instead, we did alternative lessons such as making plays with puppets, making movies with clay, or
other enrichment type activities. Opportunities to engage in text were not provided on a regular basis because of my participation in the high-potential group, and my literacy skills emaciated further.

Throughout middle school, reading anything became a struggle for me: worksheets with instructions, tests, and even the fill in the blank type of answers. Ashamed and feeling powerless, I hid the fact that I could not understand the text or worksheets required during school. The more I struggled to read, the less I read; the less I read, the further behind I became in grade-level reading proficiency.

**My High-School Reader Experience**

Unfortunately, my struggle with reading comprehension continued through high school. Disciplinary specific classes required extensive writing and textbooks required reading of complex text. Teachers expected students to come to high school with reading proficiency and reading comprehension strategies were not instructed even with evidence that I struggled with reading in the classes. I relied heavily on teacher explanation and peer support. It took me hours to decode and decipher text. I was too ashamed to ask for help, and my confidence suffered. I told myself repeatedly that I was dumb, and my test scores on the reading comprehension test reflected low reading comprehension and inability to use strategies to aid in comprehension.

In tenth grade, I had an interesting United States history class and I loved the textbook. The textbook contained definitions of key terms, easy to follow text features with picture captions, graphs, a glossary, and comprehension questions. These features helped me decipher the text. I felt so fulfilled that I was able to comprehend the text independently that I asked my history teacher if I could take a textbook home. That
summer I read the whole textbook cover to cover. The comprehension questions provided in each section of the textbook gave me guidance to my reading and I was able to teach myself to read. The pride I felt fueled my resilience to be an independent reader. Through hours of careful, slow reading, I gained enough reading proficiency to graduate from high school and college, both with honors.

**My Professional Experience**

At the time of this writing, I was in and completed my fourth year of teaching in a Midwestern public school district. This employment was preceded by three years of teaching in a Montessori school environment. Most of my experience has been teaching students Spanish in first through ninth grade. But I also have taught music and English as a second language to adults. During the 2019-2020 school year, I became the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in the district and taught ESL to first through twelfth grade. In the 2019-2020 school year, I taught approximately 288 different Spanish students seventh through ninth grade, and seventeen English Language Learners spanning first through twelfth grade. My leadership experience is a district-level student learning leadership team whose goal is high student academic achievement.

As the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in the district, I have a unique opportunity to observe teachers at all grade levels while they are conducting their lessons. The ESL teaching position also gives me an opportunity to have more personal conversations with the students. I have had a few eye-opening experiences over the past year which have given me insight into students’ experience as it relates to reading in our district. I have also had some reading-related experiences in the Spanish classroom which have left a profound impact on my professional development. The following subsections
narrate four of those experiences which have heightened my curiosity about reading comprehension for adolescents in our district.

**Experience One.** The middle school in my district recently changed to standard-based grading. To help students practice their standard’s skills in English Language Arts (ELA) used an online tool, Study Island ® (2000), which provided vignettes for students to read and then answer standard-based multiple-choice questions based on the readings. These vignettes varied in genres, themes, and topics (with no apparent connection) which required students to have background knowledge for each reading. This experience reminded me of a type of learning from text to which Alexander and Jetton (2000) refer in their research; the learning from text which was not based on the acquisition of a rich body of knowledge, but of knowledge which is unconnected and chopped up into small parts. Using Study Island® if the student received more than 20% incorrect, the student was required to redo the activity. This activity was completed independently and required extensive background knowledge for each vignette. I was left to wonder: *Without being taught how to comprehend the text being read, how were students able to improve on gleaning the correct answer to the questions being asked? Was the activity actually testing a students’ background knowledge? Was there a better way to improve literacy proficiency for students?*

**Experience Two.** Two high school students (personal communication, March 2020) reported that they struggled to understand the novels they were required to read in English class. They reported that the teacher would rarely lead a discussion on what the class was reading, check for comprehension, or provide a way to improve their reading comprehension of the novel. They said that they and the other students said they turned to
other mediums such as videos or short online descriptions to obtain quick answers to multiple questions they were required to answer to prove their comprehension. In one class, another student (personal communication, February 2020) reported that texts were not even used. He reported that the teachers simply explained the content of the text in an easy to follow format using guided notes, a lecture, and a slide show. In these classes, students listened to the teacher and then did activities. I was left to wonder: *Without discussions, use of complex text, or instruction on how to improve their comprehension, how were students learning how to read complex text and become independent proficient readers?*

**Experience Three.** This observation is a self-observation, (one of many), which highlighted my lack of experience with teaching students how to comprehend text. The use of authentic text in the classroom has been a priority for my district for the past five years. Whereas reading simple sentences in beginning Spanish was always required, in my second year of teaching in the district, I planned and implemented a more extensive reading comprehension activity. I provided text I felt they could read and provided questions for them to answer. After explaining the assignment, a student asked how they were supposed to read it. It was a valid question and I came to the surprising realization that I really did not know how to explain to them how to read it. Upon further reflection, I realized I did not even know how to help them read a passage in English, let alone in Spanish. I was left to wonder: *How do I teach students how to comprehend what they are reading? How many other teachers are lacking training on how to help their students become independent readers?*
Experience Four. In the Spring of 2019, I took a PD course for continuing education credits called, Reading Comprehension Instruction (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2014). The facilitators, J. Burling and C. Brovold introduced me to the basic concepts that content area teachers could and should teach strategies to help their students comprehend text. They also taught us the importance of using complex text classroom and how the deletion of which has a detrimental effect on a student and their lifetime achievement. This class was pivotal in shifting my beliefs as to my role for providing my students way to help comprehend what they were reading. This course, in addition to a second PD course, called K-12 Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Strategies (J. Johnson, personal communication, 2019), provided the background knowledge that I had about different reading activities, supports, and strategies which help students comprehend text. These courses were like a light bulb as I began to understand my role in my students’ literacy proficiency. These courses left me to wonder: *I can lead students through activities to comprehend text we are working on, but how do I teach students how to use reading strategies for themselves?*

The Rationale for the Capstone Question

The experience of living with and then freeing myself from low proficiency and observing and experiencing the lack of reading complex and reading comprehension strategy instruction for adolescents in my district has fed my passion for this capstone. It also led to the first draft of my research question which was as follows: *What literacy instructional practices have been found to influence reading comprehension for students?* I feared the effects of low proficiency for my students. My experiences and passions have
led to the development of my capstone question which will help me determine what literacy instructional practices help adolescents improve their reading proficiency levels.

My literacy philosophy is that all teachers need to help students become proficient readers. I strive to have reading, writing, and discussing as active parts of my daily lessons. I believe that through these activities, students improve their proficiency levels and can process language. I believe all students have a civil right to be literate and, as teachers, it is our duty to provide students the opportunity to acquire literacy proficiency, regardless of the content that we teach. Teachers create independent proficient readers by preparing activities with complex texts, and by requiring students to read, discuss and write every day.

**Context**

According to the DOE (2020), student enrollment in the district of my employment for the 2019-2020 school year had a racial mix of 92% indicating white, 3.2% indicating Hispanic or Latino, 0.6% indicating American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.6% indicating Asian, 0.5% indicating African American, and 3.1% indicating two or more race. In addition, the DOE (2020) reported that .6% of the student body were of English Learner status, 14.8% were receiving Special Education, 29.2% were receiving free or reduced lunch, and 1.7% were homeless. This district showed 39% of the high schoolers did not meet the standards in reading (DOE, 2019). According to a report edited by McKinnon, E. (personal communication, 2020) reported that 1,053 high school students were in attendance for the 2019-2020 school year.

At the time of this writing I had perused documents pertaining to literacy commitment in our district. Three documents came to my immediate attention which
were the 2019-2020 Continuous Improvement Plan (Town-Gunderson, 2019), The Reading Intervention Inventory (J. Town-Gunderson, personal communication, January 27, 2020), and the Local Literacy Plan (Preppernau & Town-Gunderson, June 14, 2019, ed. 2). The Local Literacy Plan was based on parameters set by Reading Proficiently by no Later Than Grade 3 statute 120B.12 (Legislature, 2017). The district’s strong commitment to students’ reading proficiency was apparent for grades kindergarten through third was reflected in these three documents. The plan also includes the identification of students who are at risk or have reading difficulties or are not mastering skills needed for their grade levels. The plan described different types of evidence-based literacy PD that was to be provided to teachers. A systematic and comprehensive curriculum for grades kindergarten through fifth grade was used to manage pacing for students to meet ELA and mathematical standards.

This district, at the time of this writing used initiatives and models provided by Marzano Resources which provided further evidence of their commitment to literacy and complex text. Some of these initiatives included: using research-based strategies, collaboration in professional learning communities (PLC), peer-coaching for teacher growth, higher levels of taxonomy, building academic vocabulary and complex text use, formative assessments, competency-based grading, effective teaching in every classroom, guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned with CCSS, and creating a safe and collaborative environment (Marzano Resources, 2020). These district practices provided testimony to me of the district’s commitment to student learning and supporting teachers’ growth professionally.
The district’s commitment to literacy was also apparent in its 2019-2020 Continuous Improvement Plan (Town-Gunderson, 2019) with guiding phrases such as:

- “every learner the ability to succeed” (para. 1),
- “every learner career and college ready” (para. 2),
- “guaranteed, coherent, viable curriculum”,
- “deepen use of school’s model for instruction”, and
- “foster authentic literacy across content areas” (para. 3).

At the time of this writing, the district was in the process of launching a curriculum mapping program called, AtlasNext (2020), for all subjects and grades throughout the district so that students have a guaranteed, coherent, and viable educational experience.

Even with the powerful literacy pieces in place, the percentage of the tenth graders in my district were not meeting the reading standards were 39% (DOE, 2019). There are too many students whose access to knowledge may be limited because of low reading proficiency. My literature review is important because the themes discovered in the review could drastically ameliorate the efficiency and effectiveness of my district’s and other districts’ literacy plans as they strive to help all students acquire lifelong reading literacy skills. With these thoughts and the encouragement of my content reviewer, A. Preppernau, (personal communication, April 2020), I narrowed my capstone, my question evolved to include the word secondary and read as follows: What literacy instructional practices have been found to influence reading comprehension for secondary students?

In the spring of 2020, an administrator asked me to explore the following question on the district behalf. She asked me to uncover clues as to which Midwest districts were achieving higher proficiency levels in ELA grades 3-12 and to sleuth out why (J. Town-
Gunderson, personal communication, March 4, 2020). As I began my literature review
with this question in mind, my capstone question evolved to have a more administrative
lens. With this new lens and the encouragement of my advisor, K. Killorn, (personal
communication, June 2020), my capstone question evolved to *How can a systematic
professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve
secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy
instruction?*

**Stakeholders**

Determining the answer to this capstone question has a profound effect on many
stakeholders. Beneficiaries include districts and schools, teachers, students, families, and
society.

Answering this capstone question gave me a background education on the topic of
reading literacy and vital insight into influences of different literacy practices. I wanted to
expand on Ness’s (2008) discoveries in her work published under the title of “Supporting
secondary readers: When teachers provide the ‘what’, not the ‘how’” that made the
biggest difference in improving struggling secondary students’ reading proficiency. My
quest included searching for the “how” to improve reading proficiency for all secondary
students. My personal goal is not only to influence my students in the classroom, but gain
the knowledge needed to better support other teachers in their efforts to provide students
what the need to become better readers.

It is my hope that the literacy practices found to be included in this PD will
influence district administrators and impress upon them that literacy proficiency should
be a priority for students. A new commitment by secondary school for proficiency must
be adopted by administrators and communicated to content area teachers. The work of the capstone should serve as a catalyst for improving teacher practices and guiding administration. The goal of this capstone is to have a positive influence on my district’s literacy practice priorities and to improve the student body’s literacy proficiency levels significantly in a short period of time.

Finally, the most important stakeholder is the individual students and their families. Researcher Duke and Carlisle (2011) found that a student’s low literacy skills can have lifelong implications. It can lead to shame, powerlessness, low grades and test scores, and diminished access to classroom content. As adults it can lead to poverty and poor health, as well as difficulties finding work, understanding insurance bills, paying taxes, knowing their rights, or being able to read labels while making purchases. Reading literacy is also the single most determinant in an individual's lifelong success and affects an individual's employment health wealth impacting multiple generations (Billings, 2002).

**Summary**

I began my teaching career just wanting to teach Spanish. What I accidentally discovered is that what I did in the classroom could have a profound effect on a student’s future. I found that students craved doing well and those who stopped caring were those who were struggling to access and comprehend the content. Seeing these students reminded me of my struggles in reading during school. This capstone explored this question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* The purpose of answering this question is to discover highly effective literacy practices, so that districts can provide teachers and
effective PD in order to expedite literacy proficiency skill acquisition for as many students as possible and set them up for a lifetime of success.

**Chapter One Summary**

In chapter one, I reviewed my personal history which led me to the research question of the capstone and described my difficult and shameful experience as a struggling early and high school reader. I explained how my professional experience has shaped my views of literacy and heightened my concerns about certain literacy practices that I observed. I expressed my concern about the high percentage of tenth graders and how this reflected a larger issue in the school of my employment. I shared my literacy philosophy of how literacy is an individual’s civil right and that every teacher has a responsibility to provide whatever students need in order to gain reading skills and provided information on the rationale and context for my capstone question.

Finally, I identified students, their families, teachers, schools, districts, and myself as beneficiaries of this work. Low reading literacy proficiency undermines student self-confidence, prevents easy access to content and knowledge, hinders success in the class, and has lifelong negative implications for the individual. The goal of this capstone is to excogitate the question and discover the most effective and efficient practices to raise reading levels. My hope is to influence districts as they revise their literacy plans. These changes could alter the future for many students.

**Chapter Two Preview**

The purpose of chapter two was to study the *corpus* of literature related to the capstone project question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading*
comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? This experience provided evidence to develop the systematic PD program with the goal of increasing reading proficiency for secondary students. The chapter began with an evidence-based discussion on the importance of reading for an individual over the course of their lifetime. Then, the chapter reviewed the four major themes revealed through the literature review which pertained to the capstone questions which are as follows: reading comprehension strategy instruction is necessary in the content area classroom, teachers need to use direct and explicit strategy instruction including a scope and sequence, students need frequent complex text use in the content area classroom, and teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development (PD) in order to help students improve reading proficiency.

Chapter Three Preview

The purpose of chapter three was to describe a systematic PD program which provides teachers with training in direct and explicit reading comprehension strategy instruction (RCSI) and ongoing, long-term support using coaches. Its design was influenced by the themes from the literature review. Chapter three synthesized the finding of chapter two’s extant work, revealed how the literature review guided the objectives of the program, described the project method choice and justification, clarified the context for the PD, provided a detailed description of the program including the goal and objectives of the workshop and coaching program, and outlined the timeline for its implementation.

Chapter Four Preview
The purpose of chapter four was to analyze what was learned during the process of creating a capstone question, studying and synthesizing the *opera omnia* pertaining to the question, and building the systematic PD program for teachers to be trained in direct and explicit RCSI. A personal reflection was created, stating what was learned during this process including any surprises or setbacks. The literature review was recapitulated with key citations revisited. New connections, ideas, and discoveries were revealed. Implications and limitations were discussed as well as the medium of communication for the works and the project’s significance is shared.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

The importance of literacy proficiency for an individual was necessary background information to fully appreciate the capstone question *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* Without this background information, teachers and administrators are at risk for not fully accepting the importance of literacy for an individual’s lifetime success or accepting the obligation of the PD provided in this capstone. Literacy has a profound impact on an individual’s education level, health, wealth, social well-being, and emotional well-being.

Researchers found that the level of education and reading proficiency had lifelong implications for individuals that reach beyond performing in secondary school. The benefits of reading proficiency were outlined in this topic and accentuates the importance of secondary schools' role of ensuring its students' reading literacy skills are adequate for the 21st century. Researchers agreed that reading literacy skills and extensive reading was a persons’ greatest asset and led them out of poverty (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Schmoker, 2011). These skills were imperative for post-secondary school, the workforce, and successful participation in society (Rainey & Moje, 2012). Never in human history had literacy been required at such a high level in order for an individual to be successful in life (Bullmaster-Day, [n.d.]). Reading literacy impacts a student's success in the classroom and in their life journey.
The goal of school is to create independent literate beings who can participate, contribute, and thrive in society. Literacy proficiency determines an individual's lifetime success, and schools need to prioritize providing secondary students with them to become literate beings. Literacy and education had lifelong implications for an individual’s economic and social well-being. Researchers Wolfe and Haveman (2002) found a positive link between an individual’s schooling and the return for that individual's economic and market productivity including the level of wage earnings, life-time earnings, employment rates, savings, consumer choices, and charitable giving. Researchers found a relationship between an individual’s literacy and their social well-being benefits such as longer life expectancy, level of education, happiness, donating, and volunteerism (Williams, 2010).

The effects of literacy on the emotional, social, academic, physical health of an individual were found to have profound individual and intergenerational impacts (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Researchers argued that literacy was too critical to be ignored (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, Ladson-Billings, 2006, Wolfe & Haveman, 2001). Writer Yagelski (2000) studied how reading literacy impacts the social and political self. He stated that literacy was a source of empowerment as it allows a human being to navigate life. He explained that literacy brings fulfillment and joy as it affords one to communicate thoughts and ideas and allows one to participate more completely in society.

The purpose of chapter two was to explore past literature which identified instructional practices to be included in a systematic PD program with the goal of improving literacy proficiency for secondary students. The guiding question used was *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area*
teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? The synthesis in the literature review was pertinent to fully understand the parts of the question and to become aware of extant work already completed on the related topics.

The next sections contained instructional practices which influence reading comprehension for secondary students revealed by the literature review which pertain to the capstone question. The discovered themes were used as pillars for the development of the systematic PD program of this capstone.

The first theme found to influence reading literacy was that students in the secondary classroom need more reading comprehension strategy instruction (RCSI) to understand high levels of text. Researchers found that this instruction was most effective when conducted by the content area teacher, because they were the experts in reading comprehension in their discipline.

The second theme was that there were several interdependent pieces to effective RCSI. These pieces are described in this section using the layers of an onion as an analogy. The center of the onion was independent reading comprehension. Independent reading comprehension means that the student can use their own mental processes to extract meaning from text. The layers of the onion included declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge; direct and explicit strategy instruction; scope and sequence; and systematic PD programming.

A third theme the literature review revealed to influence reading proficiency was that complex text use in the secondary schools must be used for instruction because students needed copious engagement with challenging reading.
Finally, researchers found that to improve reading proficiency, schools needed to provide teachers with coherent, ongoing, and long-term PD in reading comprehension strategy instruction.

**Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction (RCSI)**

The first theme to emerge from exploring the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* was that adolescents’ reading proficiency improved when they were provided RCSI in content area classrooms. However, researchers also found that there was a nation-wide trend of not providing this type of instruction to secondary students. Researchers argued that this had a negative effect on reading proficiency and disciplinary area performance. “The responsibility for high-quality reading instruction cannot be left to a few reading specialists; that responsibility must be shared by all teachers” (Wren & Reed, 2005, p. 2). It was therefore determined that training for content area teachers in RCSI would be a necessary element to include in a PD program. The subtopics discussed in this section with citations pertaining to RCSI in the content area classroom includes definitions of terms, secondary classrooms and RCSI, and content area teachers’ role and responsibilities in reading instruction.

**Definitions**

The following section contains terms used in this capstone including complex text, reading comprehension, reading comprehension strategies, reading comprehension strategy instruction, and types of reading comprehension strategies.
**Complex Text.** Complex text is written word which requires close or deep reading that causes the reader to use processes such as deductive reasoning and making inferences (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009). Complex text describes the disciplinary texts found in the secondary classroom such as a chemistry textbook, English Language Arts (ELA) literature anthology, or woodworking manual. “Complex text refers to printed, visual, auditory, digital, and multimedia texts that complement each standard-based unit, align to curricular goals, and represents an appropriate level of challenge for students” (Glass, 2015, p. 3).

**Literacy.** Literacy includes the ability to read and comprehend text, write explicating the meaning of text, and use higher-level thinking skills (Preppernau & Town-Gunderson, 2019).

**Reading Comprehension.** Researchers Duke and Carlisle (2011) describe comprehension as extracting and constructing meaning from spoken word or written text. Reading comprehension means understanding what is read (Fry & Kress, 2006). Dictionary.com (n.d.) describes reading comprehension as the “capacity of the mind to perceive and understand; power to grasp ideas; ability to know” (Dictionary.com, n.d., para. 4).

**Reading Comprehension Strategies.** A reading comprehension strategy is a metacognitive mechanism which students use to assist in independently understanding what they are reading. The strategies are used purposefully and consciously when the text is particularly challenging to the reader (Alexander & Jetton, 2002). Enabling students to independently comprehend text is the goal of reading comprehension strategies. A
strategy becomes a skill when it is used automatically and without thought by the reader in the act of reading (Alexander & Jetton, 2002; Nokes & Dole, 2002).

**Types of Reading Comprehension Strategies.** Reading comprehension strategies can be employed before, during and after-reading depending on the type of text and the specific reading challenge. Examples of reading comprehension strategies include monitoring what was read, adjusting reading pace, rereading, using self-generated or provided graphic organizers, answering and creating questions, recognizing story or informational text structures, previewing text, reviewing content, retelling, annotating, highlighting, taking notes, summarizing, making use of prior knowledge, using mental imagery, making a vocabulary list, and talking about what was read (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2014; Fry & Kress, 2006). Reading comprehension strategies are not limited to these on this list.

**Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction (RCSI).** This term refers to a lesson of what is and how to employ a specific reading comprehension strategy. The instruction is delivered from the teacher and includes guided and independent practice of the strategy by the student. This instruction also includes corrective feedback and a scope and sequence. In this capstone, RCSI refers to instruction which does the following: provides the student with declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of a strategy and transfers the ownership of the strategy from teacher to the student enabling the student to independently use the strategy for text comprehension.

**Lack of RCSI in the Content Area Classroom**

To influence reading comprehension and disciplinary performance, secondary schools need to provide students with reading comprehension strategy instruction.
Researcher Boardman et al. (2008) argued that reading in all subject areas was key to success for a student in high school including mathematics and science. RCSI is as important in high school as it was in elementary school. RCSI provides and develops higher cognitive reading strategies for when students encounter more complicated text.

Nationally, schools invested in the development of early elementary reading literacy skills but there was a lack of reading literacy strategy instruction in the secondary classroom (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Cantrell & Carter, 2009). Researchers Howerton and Thomas (2004) found that whereas the United States reading scores of elementary students were equivalent to those of other industrialized countries, by middle school those scores declined. Researchers Biancarosa and Snow (2006) stated that third-graders who read well were at risk of not performing or even failing in the later academic grades if teaching of reading was not provided. Nationally, elementary schools invest in building literacy skills by providing RCSI in the early grades, but research provided evidence that a decline in testing scores in middle and high school corresponded with the deletion of RCSI. This deletion of instruction denied students the strategy knowledge they needed to do well on state and national tests.

Teachers expect students to possess reading proficiency skills by the time they enter high school and focus more on content than reading comprehension strategy instruction. Researcher Ness (2008) found in her study that many teachers assumed that students understood the text that they were reading. The teacher overlooked why the students’ performance in the class did not meet expectations. The teacher misdiagnosed the underlining roadblock to engagement with the discipline content. The student’s actual issue was that the student did not possess the reading comprehension strategies required
to extract meaning from the text. Providing RCSI was not found as part of the secondary school culture and not found to be used as a solution to low performance in disciplinary classrooms (Ness, 2008).

In summary, nationally, RCSI was taught in the elementary schools, but not found to be taught by teachers in the mainstream secondary classroom even though students are required to comprehend more and more difficult text. Secondary teachers expected students to already be literacy proficient and sometimes misdiagnosed low performance for lack of motivation by students. The absence of secondary RCSI had a detrimental effect on reading proficiency levels nationwide and the lack of literacy proficiency has a profound effect on students’ ability to acquire content-area knowledge. Nationwide, the secondary school culture is for content area teachers to teach students the content of the reading, not how to read texts to understand the content.

**Content Area Teachers’ RCSI Responsibility**

In high school, students need higher cognitive reading comprehension skills as the texts provided in the content area classroom become increasingly more difficult to read. Researcher Ness (2008) reported that “The problem is a complicated one: huge numbers of our middle and high school readers struggle to comprehend their textbooks, yet teachers are not providing the reading comprehension support that would benefit these students” (p. 82). Without such instruction, high schoolers must independently develop the strategies necessary to analyze and comprehend more and more difficult text by themselves, or they simply begin to lose access to the content provided in the disciplinary texts. Researchers Kamil et al. (2008) found that RCSI is most effective when delivered by the content area teacher and that discipline-specific RCSI was critical for students to
succeed in reading secondary level content class texts. Taking time to teach RCSI allowed students to extract more information from their texts, made comprehension easier for the students, and allowed the class to cover more content in the long run.

Researchers Rissman et al. (2009) stated that “They [teachers] can help students develop the knowledge, reading, strategies, and thinking skills to understand and learn from increasingly complex text in their content areas” (as cited by Ceedar Center, 2013 p. 13). Each discipline has specialized vocabulary, text features, and reading aspects that are unique to that discipline. Researchers called content area teachers to provide discipline-specific RCSI in their content area (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Boardman, et al., 2008; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Gabriel et al., 2016; Moje, 2007; National Institute for Literacy [NIL], 2007; Ness, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Content area teachers were the experts of the idiosyncrasies of the disciplinary texts and could best educate students in developing strategies to improve students’ reading comprehension in that class (Rainey & Moje, 2012).

In addition to the evidence that supporting readers in the discipline classrooms benefits secondary students, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative (2020, www.commoncore.org), commonly referred to as the standards, require content area teachers to provide students with opportunities to build literacy skills. Specifically, *The CCSS for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, provide grade level benchmarks in disciplines to guide and assist students with literacy proficiency to prepare for life beyond the classroom. The CCSS Initiative for ELA in the content area classroom was described as follows:
The standards establish guidelines for English language arts (ELA) as well as for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects (CCSS, 2020). Because students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, the standards promote the literacy skills and concepts required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines (http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/, para. 3). These standards oblige teachers to incorporate into their curriculum ways which develop reading proficiency for their students.

In summary, researchers showed that RCSI was imperative for student reading proficiency. Content area teachers were best positioned to provide content related reading comprehension strategy instruction because they were most familiar with the text features of the discipline. Students needed reading practice all day long in all subjects (Adams, 2010; AFT, 2014; Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Armbruster, 2001; NIL 2011; Schmoker, 2018). The literature review showed that teaching RCSI in the content area classroom helped students obtain discipline-specific knowledge faster and more profoundly which allowed teacher to cover more material in their curriculum. In addition to these salient points, content area teachers are bound by the CCSS Initiative to assist students in building their reading proficiency. The theme of the importance of RCSI in the content area classroom provided the first pillar of the PD based on the capstone question: How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? By including this theme in the PD program, facilitators
could address teachers’ current beliefs about RCSI which would help secondary students improve their reading comprehension.

**Effective Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction**

The second theme to emerge from exploring the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* was that in order for RCSI to be effective, students needed to have declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of a strategy. Researchers found that this knowledge was only obtained through direct and explicit instruction. The following section describes how these pieces are interrelated using an onion as an analogy. Each piece is represented by a layer of the onion and is directly affected by the next layer. This analogy was prepared as an image called, [Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Onion](#) (see Appendix A).

There are four layers and its center which make up the onion for effective RCSI in the content area secondary classroom. The center of the onion is titled independent reading comprehension. Comprehension is the goal of reading text in school and accounts for its placement at the center of the onion. A path intersects independent reading comprehension labeled *active strategy use*. This means that the strategy is actively used by students to independently understand the text.

The first layer surrounding the center is labeled *declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge*. Researchers Roehler and Duffy (1984), were the first to discover that knowledge on these three levels was imperative for students to have cognizant use of the strategy and to successfully comprehend text. The next layer is labeled *direct and*
explicit RCSI and represents the mode of instruction that is delivered to students to obtain knowledge about and ability to use the strategy in a cognizant and active manner. Surrounding this piece is a layer called scope and sequence. Scope and sequence indicate that the strategies need have a coordinated, calculated program developed in which the strategies ramp up in sophistication as students advance through the grades.

In the next section, the reader can expect to learn about declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge; direct and explicit RCSI; and the necessity of coherent scope and sequence.

**Declarative, Procedural, and Conditional Knowledge**

In order for students to use reading comprehension strategies, researchers Afflerbach (2002), Dole and Pearson (1987), Nokes and Dole (2004), and Duffy (2002) confirmed Roehler and Duffy’s (1984) initial findings that students needed to have knowledge on three levels: declarative, procedural, and conditional. These levels of knowledge provided metacognition of the strategy enabling the student to recognize that there has been a breakdown in comprehension, determine which strategy to use, and have the knowledge to employ the strategy to fix comprehension.

**Declarative knowledge.** Declarative knowledge refers to the ability to name, have an analytic discussion about and create group consensus of understanding about a strategy. The student is able to explain the strategy including its use, purpose, and critical attributes (McEwan, 2007). This capstone, supported by the findings in the literature review, suggests using direct instruction to build declarative knowledge and further detail with researched evidence is provided in the section called direct and explicit instruction.
Procedural knowledge. Procedural knowledge refers to students’ understanding of the steps used to implement the strategy and understand the benefits the students can expect by using the strategy. Because of this knowledge they are able to independently implement the strategy step by step to aid in their comprehension of what they are reading. Research suggested that teachers describe the steps in direct instruction, using a discussion or lecture format. Then, the procedural steps would be modeled and practiced during explicit instruction (Nokes & Dole, 2004).

Conditional knowledge. Conditional knowledge refers to the awareness of when and where to use specific strategies. Students must see that the strategy can be used in several different situations and may be altered or combined with other strategies to meet the demand (Baker, 2002). When students understand the utility and flexible use of strategy, they have developed conditional knowledge of a strategy. Students built conditional knowledge through the combined use of direct and explicit instruction (Afflerbach, 2002; Dole & Pearson, 1987; Duffy, 2002; Nokes & Dole, 2004; and Roehler & Duffy, 1984).

Declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge about a strategy enables students to use the strategies in different scenarios and realize the flexibility of its use. Students possess a level of comprehension skill which they use unconsciously when the text is easy for them. With declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of a reading comprehension strategy, a student develops the metacognition to employ the strategy in a different scenario when they encounter challenging texts.

Direct and Explicit RCSI
The purpose of strategy instruction is for students to be able to learn how to use strategies independently so that they can become more proficient readers. Researchers found that using direct and explicit RCSI was the most effective way to improve reading proficiency for students (AFT, 2014; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Boardman, et al., 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Kamil et al., 2008; NIL, 2007; Ness, 2008; Nokes & Dole, 2004). Writer Green, (n.d.) described explicit instruction to include modeling, guided practice, independent practice, and feedback and was an effective instructional practice that enhances learning in the classroom.

Researchers Nokes and Dole (2004) explained that for students to fully develop declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of a strategy, students needed a discussion about the strategy prior to what is traditionally thought of as explicit instruction. Some researchers such as Roehler and Duffy (1984) and AFT (2014) folded the discussion step into explicit instruction and call the whole process explicit instruction (as cited in Nokes & Dole, 2004). Researcher Marzano (2017) lumped direct and explicit instruction together and call it direct instruction. Other researchers named direct and explicit strategy separately, calling the discussion step direct instruction (NIL, 2002). Regardless of how the instruction is named, the above researchers agreed that students need to have knowledge about what they are about to do or learn, see it modeled and have scaffold practice using it. For this capstone, direct instruction is itemized as a separate step in order to highlight the importance of the discussion which develops a student’s declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge about the strategies and allows for the independent use of the strategy by the student.
**Direct Instruction.** The purpose of direct instruction is for students to obtain declarative knowledge, to begin to develop their procedural, and conditional knowledge about a strategy, and to begin to gain understanding of how to employ a reading strategy independently. Through discussion or lecture a mutual understanding of the strategy is created for the teacher and the student. Direct instruction is dominated by teacher talk either and helps in making the case that using the strategy aids in student comprehension (Roehler & Duffy 1984).

In direct instruction the teacher names and defines the strategy. Researchers Kamil et al. (2008) stressed the significance of telling students what strategies they are going to learn and provide a compelling case for its utility. Students begin to build their procedural knowledge as teachers describe the steps taken to employ the strategy (Nokes & Dole 2004). The teacher also provides examples of how the strategy could be used in a couple of contexts along with how to vary the strategy to make it useful in different scenarios, thus building conditional knowledge of the strategy. Students learn how to adjust the strategy and see its flexible use (Duke & Pearson, 2002). In summary, in direct instruction, the teacher names, defines, describes, and discusses the strategy and its use so that students develop declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge needed for use on an independent metacognitive level.

Researcher, writer, and educator McEwan, (2007) itemized steps of direct instruction as follows:

- Name, define, and describe the strategy,
- explain the purpose of the strategy and how it is useful for reading comprehension,
• describe the important attributes of the strategy and how it can be modified for different situations,
• state the steps in using the strategy, and
• provide examples and nonexamples of its use (McEwan, 2007 p. 4).

By directly explaining the idiosyncrasies of a strategy, teachers provide students metacognitive awareness of the strategy which starts their journey of independently using them. It is not merely enough to name the strategy, to mention which strategy to use, or to assume that students will know how to use specific strategies if they see it modeled in use by the teacher (Durkin, 1978). This in-depth discussion is needed for students to fully understand the strategy and its use.

**Explicit Instruction.** The second step of the instructional format is explicit instruction. This means that the teacher provides overt modeling of the steps to employ the independent strategy use and the conditions where the strategy would be useful to aid in reading comprehension. Researchers McEwan (2015), NIL (2007), and Nokes and Dole (2004) divided explicit instruction into three parts including teacher modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. Students must see the strategy in action and have an opportunity to use the strategy in guided and independent practice with feedback.

**Modeling with Think-Aloud.** Researchers Duffy et al. (1988), and Duke and Pearson (2002) found the best way to model strategy use was for teachers to speak aloud their thought processes to reveal transparent use of the strategy. This is commonly called *think-aloud* and makes the use of the strategy explicit. Educational consultant McEwan (2007) describes this type of modeling as a metacognitive activity where teachers (or students) speak aloud their thoughts as they regard what they have read as they use a
strategy to comprehend. Researchers Nokes and Dole (2004) describe think-aloud as revealing “the invisible mental processes by expert readers” (p. 168). The purpose of this modeling is so that students can see and hear what to do metacognitively speaking, while using the strategy to comprehend the text (McEwan, 2007). Students continue to build their procedural and conditional knowledge during this stage of the instruction because students can see the steps and transparent mental processes of the teacher as they use the strategy.

Teachers model a variety of examples and non-examples, how to adjust for problems, and may float from using one strategy to using another. This show the strategies flexible use and to build conditional knowledge about the strategy (Nokes & Dole, 2004). Students need to be able to independently recognize scenarios when their reading may break down or in other words, recognize the conditions where this may happen. Then they can employ the appropriate strategy based on the examples the teacher has supplied. This conditional knowledge creates the flexibility in the strategy use which makes the strategy more useful for the students’ independent use (Nokes & Dole, 2004). The evidence of becomes apparent as students observe the teacher use metacognition to understand the text.

*Guided Practice.* Once the teacher has answered any questions pertaining to the strategy’s use (some additional examples should be prepared for reteaching) and the teacher feels the students are ready, guided practice must be provided for students to try out the new reading strategy. Guided practice refers to practice with the strategy where the students become involved. Researchers Kamil et al. (2008) explained that strategy instruction needed to include active participation with support and scaffold activities.
The purpose of this part of explicit instruction is to bridge the gap between the students’ current strategy use ability to where they are using the strategies independently (Nokes & Dole, 2004). Educator Warner (n.d.) described guided practice as guiding the student to use what they have learned through a group or cooperative learning activity, with feedback and guidance from the teacher. The teacher’s role is to monitor, help, and provide feedback on the activity (Warner, M., n.d., para. 5). Other guided activities include [insert here].

The teacher provides a large amount of guidance as the students begin to build procedural knowledge about how to employ the steps of the strategy. Researchers Biancarosa and Snow (2006) describe the transition from guided practice to independent practice as scaffold instruction, which is when teachers provide decreasing amounts of support as students gain mastery over the strategy use.

**Independent Practice.** Teachers scaffold students with more and more independent practice providing feedback on and reteaching of the strategy if necessary (Kamil et al., 2008). Instructor Warner (n.d.) described independent practice as a practice provided by the teacher where the student has an opportunity to “solo”...whatever you’ve led them to in the input and guided practice parts of the lesson (Warner, n.d., para. 6). The gradual release of use of the strategy is imperative so that students practice using the strategies independently. The teacher gives students provides feedback on the use of the strategy itself. Students need a balance between having the opportunity to talk about the strategy and its use, practice using the strategy in scaffold activities, receiving corrective feedback, and using the strategies independently. Students need many opportunities to practice so the student becomes aware of their flexible use.
**Scope and Sequence**

The next layer to effective RCSI in the Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Onion (see Appendix A) and surrounding direct and explicit instruction was *scope and sequence*. According to Tophatmonocle (2020), scope and sequence refers to:

a term that describes the ideas and concepts that will be covered in a book or course within a curriculum. This usually comes in list format, with all topics listed in the order that they appear in the book or course. This list describes what students would have learned after finishing the book or course. (para. 1)

In the context of RCSI, scope refers to the strategies selected by the department or other team that the students learn over the course of their secondary school career. Sequence refers to the order and manner that the strategies ramp up in sophistication. Common terminology is created, and the sequencing gives the students a coherent experience. This is most effective when organized schoolwide but may also be by department if organizing schoolwide is not possible (Kamil et al., 2008; Moats, 2002). Direct and explicit strategy instruction was most effective when planned school-wide (Kamil et al., 2008; Moats, 2002).

**Summary**

In summary, researchers found that students need to have declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge use of strategies in order to use the strategies independently. Providing direct and explicit RCSI was effective in building that knowledge and improved adolescents' reading proficiency. Researchers agreed that students needed detailed discussions about the strategy and apparent modeling of the strategy’s use. The content area teacher needs to use think aloud so students can hear the metacognition of
the teacher while the strategy is being implemented. Students need ample time to try the strategy out in a variety of reading assignments both in guided and independent practice with feedback provided. A scope and sequences needed to be created school-wide for the RCSI to be effective. The Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Onion (see Appendix A) has been prepared to visualize how all these parts are interrelated.

The theme using direct and explicit RCSI with scope and sequencing to improve secondary students’ independent reading comprehension was the second pillar of the PD program created for this capstone. The project is based on the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?*

**Complex Text Use**

The third theme discovered in the literature review to influence literacy proficiency and should be included in a systematic PD program was that secondary students needed ample opportunity to read complex text to improve comprehension. Complex text affords students the opportunity to engage with rich vocabulary and new ideas. It exposes them to challenging text features and rich sentence structures. These experiences expand their minds and provide a foundation for them to comprehend high and more complex texts which need to navigate through their lives.

*Positive Influence of Complex Text Use*

Adolescents’ reading comprehension improved when they are provided with opportunities to learn how to read authentic, complex text in their content area classrooms. Researcher Adams (2010) explained that students needed the opportunity to
be exposed to and engage with complex text. Her research showed that through this exposure students acquire new and vast vocabulary which improved reading comprehension. Writer Schmoker (2018), stated that students needed time to engage with critical content and each discipline must provide time and opportunity to read, write, and discuss complex text pertaining to the daily lesson. He also stressed the importance of providing students in all subject copious activities which practice reading authentic literacy provided in books, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, academic reports, forms, and technical manuals (Schmoker, 2011).

Students need to be provided time to engage complex text with guidance and feedback from their content area teacher. As previously stated, students need to practice reading complex text in all of their subject areas all day long (Adams, 2010; AFT, 2014; Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Armbruster, 2001; NIL 2011; Schmoker, 2018). With practice, students’ comprehension of challenging text improves, and their reading proficiency increases. When the teachers provide copious opportunities to read complex text in all content areas throughout the school, the effects can be profound. Researcher Shanahan (2020) stated that teachers can aid in students’ ability to have productive interactions with harder texts with effective reading instruction. He continued that classroom should provide a range of texts in their classroom.

Students needed copious amounts of practice reading and wrestling with challenging text so that they learn how to independently apply reading strategies. Writers Gomez and Gomez (2007) stated that this new era would require students to extract information from, analyze, and synthesize the complex text which should be provided in
the classroom. Failure to do so, Gomez and Gomez argued, may be the primary reason students had low performance in disciplinary classrooms (as cited by Schmoker, 2011).

In addition to the evidence that using complex text in the discipline classrooms benefits secondary students in the classroom and beyond, students need exposure to and practice reading complex text in preparation for state testing. The CCSS Initiative (www.commoncore.org, 2020) requires students to read and navigate complex text. The *Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* standards require students to analyze, problem-solve, and think critically as they read text. The use of complex text is a responsibility of content area teachers and bound by The CCSS Initiative to do so.

**Negative Consequence of Complex Text Deletion**

In this capstone paper, *complex text deletion* refers to the practice of removal of disciplinary and grade-level appropriate text use. Complex text deletion can mean that the complex text has been replaced with a lower level text, or completely replaced by a different medium such as videos, lectures, teacher provided notes, and discussions. Researchers found that complex text deletion from classroom use occurred because of limited time available in curricula pacing and to meet the needs of varied levels of reading proficiencies in one classroom. The word *Lexile* will be used frequently during the next section and refers to a qualitative measurement used to rate the readability of a book and the reading level or ability of the student (Wikipedia.com, n.d.). Lexile is based on the vocabulary, sentence length, and sentence complexity used by the text or the reader.
Researchers Duke and Pearson (2002) showed that students needed experiences with a wide range of text genres for students to improve their reading proficiency. Unfortunately, the literature showed that there was a complex text crisis that has occurred in the United States. As expert educators prepare adolescents for the college, universities, careers, and the workforce, secondary schools must commit to providing students with disciplinary text. These texts will be the epicenter of their work and interaction with others (Moje et al., 2011). Administrator Prepperneau, A. (personal communication, May 12, 2020) said that students need exposure to challenging text with the teacher. Without it, students will not be able to grow in their reading and use strategies to help read at those higher Lexile. Researchers Boardman et al. (2008) argued that the denial of complex text use prevented students from accessing content in all subjects. They found that students failed to learn how to process challenging texts and claimed that this prevented them from accessing grade-level content in mathematics, history, and science.

The literacy instructional practice of avoiding the use of complex text and replacing with lower level text or deleting text altogether in the secondary classroom had been found to influence reading comprehension for secondary students in a negative way. When this pattern of alternative mediums for content knowledge acquisition is repeated across classes and throughout the school, the effects can be devastating to student reading proficiency levels. Although the reason for complex text deletion from the content area classroom are many, two of these reasons with citations are included in the following paragraphs.

**Lack of Time.** Content area teachers are under pressure to meet the demands of the and discipline curricula requirements. Researchers found that teachers circumvent using
challenging text and the need to teach reading comprehension strategies by using alternative methods to present core material such as using several modalities for presentations, videos, simplified text, simplified teacher presentation, teacher or peer explanation, (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Kamil et al., 2008; Ness, 2008; Williams, 2010). Researcher Shanahan (2020) found in his research that teachers provided lower Lexile level of text instead of providing instruction to navigate and comprehend challenging texts. For a content area teacher, Shanahan found, using lower level texts provided a shortcut to student discipline knowledge acquisition. Teachers favored saving time with quick content knowledge acquisition, over taking the time to teach students to read the higher Lexile texts. However, the studies showed that complex text deletion prevented students from assesses the grade-level content area material, thus, requiring more teacher intervention, supports, and time (Boardman et al., 2008; Shanahan, 2020).

Literature reviewer Shanahan (2020) explained that the research revealed “that limiting students to texts they can already read well reduces their opportunity to learn by limiting their exposure to sophisticated vocabulary, rich content and complex language” (p. 16). He argued that it did not make sense to teach students to read books they already understand and that if schools were serious about raising reading achievement, they must provide complex text use in the classroom. By providing text that was too easy for students, teachers denied students learning opportunities to confront and comprehend difficult text features (Shanahan, 2020). Although teachers felt that by providing the content in an easier Lexile or medium they were saving time in their curriculum, in the long run students took longer to comprehend the content of the class because they did not possess the reading levels necessary to do so.
**Varied Leveled Reading Proficiencies in One Classroom.** Researchers Boardman et al. (2008) found that teachers commonly used support strategies such as graphic organizers, simplified notes, heterogeneous grouping, providing pictures, or using leveled texts. These supports were used to avoid the need to teach reading comprehension strategies and to meet the needs of varied levels of reading proficiencies in one classroom (Boardman et al., 2008). Other researchers found that teachers altered their assignments so that reading complex text would not even be needed (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Writer Schmoker (2018) found that when student comprehension was impeded, teachers provided students alternative supports or other mediums (such as videos, individual explanations, alternative reading or assignments) in order to differentiate and provide access to content based on reading levels. This instructional practice denied students reading practice of complex, authentic text.

**Summary**

In summary, teaching students how to read and comprehend complex text is necessary for lifelong success and needs to be provided as reading material in the content area classes for students to build skills to read them. Content area teachers are bound by the CCSS to provide opportunities to engage complex text in the discipline classroom. However, curricula prioritize quick acquisition of content knowledge over digesting and engaging with complex text. Shortcuts to assist students in obtaining content knowledge without reading strips them of practice with higher levels of text which they can expect to encounter in their adult lives, colleges, and careers. Through this literature review, the importance of complex text use as a medium for instruction in the content area classroom
and its influence on a students’ reading proficiency became apparent. The reluctance and avoidance to use complex text in the classroom by teachers also became apparent. Therefore, the theme of complex text use in the content area classroom and the importance of its use as frequent use was the third pillar included in PD project grounded in the literature review. The guiding question which revealed the third pillar was as follows: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?*

**Professional Development**

When schools provided content area teachers with PD on how to instruct reading comprehension strategies in the direct and explicit instruction format, reading proficiency for adolescents improved (Ness, 2008). Researcher Moats (2002) found that ongoing PD for secondary teachers in literacy instruction prevented reading failure for adolescents. There were four characteristics revealed through the literature review that were imperative for successful delivery of the PD of improving literacy proficiency for secondary students.

The first characteristic for a successful PD was that participants involved in the program must believe in the value of the training and the core set of beliefs revealed by the literature review. These beliefs included literacy proficiency for an individual for their lifetime success. These beliefs also include that reading proficiency for secondary students must be a priority for the school, all content area teachers have a responsibility to help develop students’ literacy proficiency, and that complex text must be used frequently for instruction. The second characteristic is PD must provide the clear learning
objective for the professional development. In this capstone, the learning was the lucid exposure to and instruction on how to teach RCSI in the direct and explicit format. Profession development must be coherent, ongoing, and long-term in order to be successful. The most effective PD programs used coaches to continue learning beyond the workshop (K. Killorn, personal communication, June 9, 2020; Moats, 2002; Toll, 2015). Thirdly, content area teachers have misconceptions, hesitancies, and barriers to teaching reading strategies in their classrooms (Boardman et al., 2007; Cantrell, et al., 2008; Hellen & Greenleaf, 2007; Ness, 2008). The PD must be willing to addresses, problem-solve, and attempt to overcome these roadblocks. Finally, PD must be ongoing and long term through the use of coaches in order to be successful. These characteristics are described below in detail with their citations.

Value of the Professional Development

The PD must communicate administration’s priority to the learning of the PD, in this case, that content area teachers provide RCSI in the classroom. The message from the PD facilitators must produce research-based evidence of the importance of reading proficiency for the students’ success for school and beyond. Evidence provided must supply a cogent case that teaching reading comprehension strategies in the content area classroom improves reading comprehension and acquisition of content knowledge for adolescents. The facilitators must also outline the content teacher’s responsibility in helping develop that proficiency including the teachers’ responsibility to fulfill English Language Arts Standards (http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/) in the content area classroom (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2020; Glass, 2007; J. Joseph, personal communication, May 19, 2020). This messaging must include evidence of the
importance of complex text use in the classroom and how this supports an adolescent’s development of literacy (Glass, 2007; Schmoker, 2018).

Researcher Williams (2010) claimed, “Schools need to make literacy instruction a higher priority in core subjects by providing PD opportunities for content teachers to learn how to teach literacy and supporting the need for class time dedicated to implementing strategies” (p. 1). Research has shown that the more schools focus on teaching these strategies the more improvements in reading they have seen for their students. PD facilitators need to provide evidence to the content area teachers that teaching reading comprehension strategies in their discipline is important and an effective use of their time as reading comprehension strategies will help students understand and retain information in their classes.

**Clear Learning Objectives of the PD**

An effective characteristic of PD is that teachers need training on the craft of teaching students reading strategies for the purpose of learning how to instruct strategies but to also realize their value in comprehending discipline content. Researcher Ness (2008) found that meaningful, coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development helped teachers to realize the importance of reading comprehension for their students. Research from the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) stated that PD necessitated teaching teachers how to instruct RCSI in the direct and explicit format, and educating on systematic RCSI programming that is designed for the school (as cited by AFT, 2014).

The coordination of such a program is complicated and the presentation of it needs to be well planned so that the teachers and students feel a sense of coherence. The PD
needs to be coherent in that, teachers provide specifics on how to deliver instruction on reading comprehension strategies, with opportunities for teachers to practice.

**Roadblocks to be Addressed**

Thirdly, the PD must be candid about teachers’ barriers and reluctance to the new initiatives. Coordinators of the program and administrators must address, problem solve, and attempt to overcome content area teachers’ roadblocks to implementing RCSI. Three anticipated roadblocks were prominently found in the literature review and those themes are synthesized in the follow subtopics. The first is that teachers are often unaware that a student needs to learn reading comprehension strategies to access content in secondary school. The second is that teachers feel there is a lack of time in their curriculum to provide such instruction. The third roadblock is teachers feel unprepared or unskilled in the art of instructing reading comprehension strategies. There may be additional roadblocks that teachers must RCSI which administrators need to be aware of and to work through in partnership with the teachers.

**Awareness.** Researchers also found that teachers often mistake students’ lack of achievement in subject area classes for other reasons than low reading proficiency (Ness, 2008). Teachers are experts at reading in their disciplines and are often unaware that a student needs to learn reading comprehension strategies to access content. Teachers are already experts in that discipline and need to explicitly teach students the fine points of understanding of how the language in that content area is structured. Because reading in their content area is second nature to the teacher professional of that field, they are often not aware that they need to explicitly teach strategies to read their literature in their area.
**Lack of time.** Secondary teachers are content-oriented because they are under pressure for students to meet standards and curriculum demands. This puts teachers in a position to prioritize learning goals and objectives for lessons providing little time for reading literacy strategy instruction. Researchers Boardman, et al. (2008), Ness (2008), NIL (2007) pointed out that teachers are pressured from the requirements of state standards and school curricula. This makes teachers feel as if there is little time in their schedule for RCSI. Professional development can help facilitators communicate administration’s priority of providing RCSI and how doing so actually allows students to acquired content material more efficiently. The coherent, ongoing, long-term structure of the PD will give teachers a sense of time allotted in their curriculum to achieve the literacy goals.

**Unpreparedness.** When educators obtain their teaching license, often the coursework in preparation for the teaching career is void of extensive training on how the literacy of the discipline that they teach in secondary schools (NIL, 2007; Shanahan, 2013; Wren & Reed, 2005). Researchers Heller and Greenleaf (2007) found that teachers are reluctant to provide reading instruction because they do not feel prepared, unqualified, or comfortable teaching students the reading literacy strategies (as cited in Boardman et al., 2008). Providing teachers with PD in the art of teaching reading comprehension strategies should boost teacher confidence in its instructions. Professional development was found by researchers to make a difference in a teacher's attitudes and beliefs about teaching comprehension reading strategies (Cantrell et al., 2008) including raising their awareness of importance of literacy in their content areas (Hall, 2005, as cited in Cantrell et al., 2008).
Summary. In summary, when the PD is transparent in addressing teachers’ roadblocks and hesitancy, teachers should become more comfortable with the program, the program initiatives, the program leaders, and using RCSI in the classroom. Any attempt by the coordinators of the program or administration to subterfuge or dismiss teachers’ hesitancy and roadblocks to implementing strategy instruction could undermine the program’s success. Professional development is an opportunity to frankly address, problem-solve, and overcome many of those roadblocks.

Ongoing and Long-Term with Coaching

Fourthly, research showed that the only PD program which has been proven effective was a program which included a coaching segment. Teachers needed ongoing PD which includes collaborating with peers about ways to incorporate RCSI and share ideas (NIL, 2007). Researcher Moats (2002) stressed the importance of using literacy “coaches” who facilitate PD to ensure that all students are provided what they need in all content areas. Researchers Brown et al. (1996) found that learning to instruct reading comprehension well is a long-term process (as cited by Ness, 2008). Therefore, the RCSI PD must be on-going and long-term, revisiting the direct and explicit instructional format in a calculated way. Researcher Heineke (2013) found that effective professional learning was most effective when it was ongoing, and job-embedded. The learning needed to involve teacher reflection which challenged current beliefs as teachers explored new practices based on the training. According to the Standards for Professional Learning (2011), the use of on-site coaches was needed to help with embedding the new techniques into a routine (as cited by Heineke, 2013). Based on these theories, it was determined a
systematic RCSI PD program would need to be created with coherent, ongoing, and long-term characteristics.

Researcher Saaris (2017) argued that facilitators needed to provide a system for the teachers to try the new concepts out in chunked amounts after the official workshop in their classrooms. Teachers needed to be provided time for guided practice, sharing ideas, collaboration with instructional teams, reflection, feedback (Saaris, 2017). Researchers Cantrell and Hughes (2008) found that teachers’ efficacy increased if coached in the core concepts of literacy (as cited in Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010). Their work showed that teachers valued the coaching experience when the coaches provided collaboration opportunities, ongoing support and feedback, and direct instruction on research-based instructional practice. K-5 math coach C. Norton (personal communication June 24, 2020) explained that her program showed to be most effective when teachers were provided choices on how to reflect on their own performance. Researchers Denton et al. (2007) found that the students of teachers who were provided literacy coaching experienced improved performance in components of literacy (as cited by Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010).

The capstone project selected to use coaches to help teachers process and insert RCSI and complex text use into their existing lessons and to retain the fidelity of the strategy use. Administrator A. Preppernau (personal communication, June 11, 2020) pointed out the importance of coaches in that feedback and re-training is always needed as everyone is at risk from straying from the model of whatever strategy was to be implemented. Professor S. Manikowski (personal communication, March 2020) stated that fidelity was needed when implementing RCSI in order to obtain full efficacy of their
use. To increase and retain fidelity of the RCSI program, the model of using coaches for ongoing training and long-term with opportunities to collaborate in professional learning groups, reflect, and receive feedback was selected.

**Summary**

Professional development must be provided in order to create an new awareness of the importance of RCSI in the content area classroom, the value of using complex text, and the responsibility of content area teachers to provide strategy instruction as it pertains to their students’ proficiency growth. Addressing the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* also revealed that the PD needed to have four characteristics. Firstly, participants and administrators must come to an agree to the beliefs of the PD as supported by the literature such as: the influence of reading proficiency over the course of an individual’s school career, life time and the importance of secondary schools to make RCSI and reading proficiency a priority. Secondly, teacher need to have training on delivering RCSI to their students and much receive ongoing, long-term training by coaches. Thirdly, teachers need to have their roadblocks (such as: awareness, lack of time, and unpreparedness) addressed in order to full accept RCSI as a part of their routine. Finally, the PD must be ongoing, long-term and use coaches in order to continue teachers’ growth in RCSI.

**Summary**

Reading literacy has a profound effect on an individual's success, education, wealth, and health and affects their ability to participate fully in society. Reading literacy
should be a top priority for schools, including in secondary schools where reading and comprehending text is at its highest level. Four major convergences were revealed by the capstone question: How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? The themes influencing reading comprehension for secondary students were stated in a prior section as:

- students need RCSI in the content area secondary classroom to learn how to comprehend complex text,
- teachers need to use direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence in order for the strategy instruction to be effective,
- students need to frequently use complex text as their main source of learning in the disciplinary classroom, and
- teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully instruct reading comprehension strategies.

The literature review revealed that RCSI provided in content area classes affected student reading proficiency in secondary schools. The instructional practice of using direct and explicit instruction with systematic RCSI programming also influenced reading proficiency for students and is best visualized using the Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Onion (see Appendix A). Researchers noted that students need comprehensive exposure to complex text to develop reading literacy skills. There is a risk of complex text deletion from mainstream content classrooms, as teachers feel pressured to deliver content in a timely manner, and to level the playing field for all reading abilities in their
classroom. Studies showed that providing teachers with coherent, ongoing, and long-term PD influences reading literacy for students.

**Chapter Three Preview**

This literature review stressed the importance of communicating the message of the literacy instructional practices that have been found to influence reading comprehension for secondary students. The best way to communicate this information to administrators and staff is through a PD project with ongoing, long-term use of coaches.

The systematic RCSI PD program was designed using four segments to deliver coherent, ongoing, and long-term training and support for teachers using coaches. These parts included pre-work, a workshop, coaching and collaboration, and post-work to determine the program efficacy. The goal of the RCSI PD program is to improve student reading proficiency using direct and explicit strategy instruction. The objectives of the PD program are fivefold and are follows:

- to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
- to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
- to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
- to select complex text which is used for individual lessons, and
- to train coaches to help teachers develop and retain RCSI fidelity.

Chapter Three outlines the parameters of this project opening with a chapter overview based on the themes found in the Literature Review. The Program Rationale
topic provides evidence of the PD format which uses an interactive style workshop and the use of the partnership coaching method. Chapter Three also describes the setting, and the audience for the PD. The next section of the chapter is the detailed description of the PD including the four segments of pre-work, a workshop, coaching and collaboration, and post-work. The chapter closes with a timeline and a summary. Chapter Three was the product that resulted from the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?*
CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

The purpose of chapter three is to describe a PD plan which addresses the question: 

*How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* The literature review revealed four major themes that influenced reading comprehension for adolescents. The themes were as follows:

- students need RCSI in the content area secondary classroom to learn how to comprehend complex text,
- teachers need to use direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence in order for the strategy instruction to be effective,
- students need to frequently use complex text as their main source of learning in the disciplinary classroom, and
- teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully instruct reading comprehension strategies

These themes made up the pillars for the systematic PD program described in this capstone project.

The implementation of this PD program could profoundly improve reading comprehension for secondary students and ultimately affect teachers, schools, families, and society. The district of my employment had a literacy plan in place, especially for the early grades. However, some gaps appeared after comparing the district’s plan and the themes revealed by the literature review in chapter two. The findings from the literature
review guided the creation of the systematic RCSI PD program with the goal of raising reading comprehension for secondary students in my district.

Chapter three includes the specifications for the systematic RCSI PD program using the following topics: introduction, the overview of the project, the research-based parameters, the context including the setting and the audience, the PD specifications, and the timeline for implementation including personal deadlines.

**Overview of the Project**

Chapter two revealed themes that answered the capstone question *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* These themes provided the pillars for the parameters and specifications of the systematic RCS PD program. Improving secondary students’ reading comprehension was the central goal of the systematic RCSI PD program. The objectives of the systematic RCSI PD program, included the following:

- to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
- to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
- to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
- to select complex text which is used for individual lessons, and
- to develop a coaching program to help teachers develop and retain RCSI fidelity.
In addition to these objectives, it was also important to overcome teachers’ roadblocks to RCSI delivery in the content area classroom, and to create an RCSI scope and sequence school-wide (Kamil et al., 2008; S. Manikowski, personal communication, April, 2020; Moats, 2002).

To achieve the goal and objectives of the program, four segments of the program were designed. The first segment included selection and pre-training of the RCSI coaches, a pre-survey to the content area teachers, and a pre-assessment for the students. The second segment included a workshop where teachers, coaches, and administrators build background knowledge, learn and practice RCSI, and begin the scoping and sequencing process, and select the complex text to be used for instruction in individual lessons. The third segment continued the work of the RCSI workshop using coaches who provide ongoing training, collaboration, and reflection opportunities for professional learning communities (PLC) and individual teachers. The fourth segment involved coaches collecting data on student proficiency levels and evaluating teachers’ growth using teacher and coach reflection worksheets.

The following topic provides the rationale for the development of the PD and the parameters for the program.

**Program Rationale**

Several studies showed the efficacy of using a PD to provide content area teachers with background knowledge about reading proficiency and the role of the content area teacher was an effective way to improve reading comprehension for secondary students. By providing education and ongoing training in a professional setting, research showed success in challenging traditional beliefs that RCSI is the responsibility of the English
Language Arts teacher or the reading specialists (Kamil et al., 2008). It was determined that to provide content area teachers more competency and training for RCSI, the program would need to include a workshop segment (to build guiding beliefs, learn RCSI, collaborate about complex text, and address roadblocks to RCSI) and a coaching segment (to provide) ongoing training, reflection, and collaboration with the assistance of coaches.

Both the workshop segment and the coaching segment were necessary to answer the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?*

**Rationale for Workshop**

Teachers have many misconceptions about their role as literacy instructors in addition to other roadblocks such as their own beliefs about their competency and preparation as reading comprehension strategy instructors. As previously stated in Chapter Two, PD can make a difference in a teacher's attitudes and beliefs about teaching comprehension reading strategies (Cantrell et al., 2008). Researcher Hall (2005) found that teachers who attended reading literacy workshops were more likely to understand and realize the importance of literacy in their content area (as cited in Cantrell et al., 2008). Researchers Kamil et al. (2008) stressed the importance of providing PD to teachers to inspire and motivate administrators. It was determined from this evidence that providing teachers information, discussion, and reflection opportunities in a workshop format would be the best practice to begin the process of challenging teachers’ beliefs about RCSI.
In designing the project, literature on was consulted. Researcher Saaris (2017) recommended beginning the PD with the student desired outcome. The goal of this capstone’s PD program was to improve secondary student proficiency. The goals were planned to be shared and revisited often during the workshop and other segments of the program so that teachers and administrators keep the student outcome in mind.

Researcher Saaris (2017) stressed that the PD experience be engaging for the participants with opportunities for the teachers to try out the new tools. The workshop segment of the RCSI PD was therefore planned with a variety of activities designed to be engaging and hands-on such as large and small group discussions, an online technology game, reflection, and collaboration opportunity, and guided and independent practice with strategy instruction. Participants needed to be engaged, and given an opportunity to create, participate, and showcase their ability and knowledge (Kalinowski et al., 2019). Researcher Knowles’ (1992) guiding principles for adult learning stressed the importance that “the learners be active participants in a process of inquiry, rather than passively receive transmitted content” (p. 11).

Vocabulary or prior materials were easy powerful starting points, giving teachers a sense of control and understanding of what it was they were going to learn. (Kalinowski et al., 2019). This influenced the workshop format in that the second activity after talking about student goals was coming to a mutual understanding of definitions of terms.

Researchers Kalinowski et al. (2019) pointed out important considerations when providing content area teachers with strategies to increase proficiencies such as tapping into teachers’ prior knowledge and providing opportunities for teachers to share their previous experiences in the classroom. The workshop segment considered the evidence
provided by these researchers by preparing activities for teachers to collaborate with colleagues, share out ideas, create lesson plans, choose texts and activities, read and explore resources, and brainstorm.

**Rationale for Partnership Coaching**

After review of literature written on PD best practices, it was determined that the program also needed a segment which provides teachers ongoing training with the use of coaches, collaboration with peers, and opportunities for reflection. Considering on the audience for the program and reviewing different coaching approaches, a hybrid of the partnership approach was selected as the approach format. This approach had several qualities which are like the cognitive approach. These qualities include the use of open-ended questioning to reveal the teacher’s thinking and reflection, listening and pausing for response, and collaborating in a partnership to come up with solutions together. The district in which the RCSI PD program is envisioned to be implemented has had many staff and coaches trained in the cognitive approach. Also, our district already uses a form of partnership coaching with the methods and initiatives provided by Marzano Resources, (2020). This style of coaching, as I have experienced it in our district, reminds me of partnership coaching. The coaching our district which is based on Marzano Resources (2020) use of open-ended question as the coach pulls reflection from the coachee to unlock their own wisdom. Therefore, it is inferred that the partnership approach would be a good match for the high school staff who would be participating in the program.

The partnership approach creates a relationship between coached and coachees by balancing the importance of the interaction and what is done (Knight, 2018). Researchers Knight (2007) and Cory and Bradley (1998) found that teachers felt that they learned
more, were more engaged, and enjoyed the training more when presented in the partnership approach, over the traditional approach where the coach is in a superior position. Educator, consultant, and writer, Toll (2014), described the role of the literacy coach as one who “partners with teachers for job-embedded professional learning that enhances teachers’ reflection on students, the curriculum, and pedagogy for the purpose of more effective decision making” (p.10).

One of the essential characteristics of successful partnership coaching is that teachers feel they have autonomy, value, and choice. Researcher Knight (2019) put it this way, “Indeed, after studying coaching for more than 20 years, I have concluded that recognizing and honoring teacher autonomy is an essential and fundamental part of effective coaching” (p. 14). He also stated that, “To foster improvement and responsible accountability, instructional coaches must honor teachers’ choices and discretion” (p. 15). Math coach C. Nolte (personal communication, June 2020) confirmed that through her years of coaching, teacher achievement improved when she provided teachers choice of questions for reflection, rather than requiring them to answer pre-provided questions. This gave teachers a sense of control over the experience (C. Nolte, personal communication, June 2020).

There are three types of partnership approaches which are *facilitative*, *dialogical*, and *directive* (Knight, 2018). It was determined that the approach most appropriate for the coaches of the program was the dialogical approach. I felt the coaches needed to have the characteristics of the coach who focused on inquiry, listening, and conversational moves to make the teacher aware of what they already knew. But also, the coach needs to guide the teacher comprehension reading strategies instruction through demonstrations of
the use of direct and explicit strategy instruction, thus reflecting characteristics of the directive coach. Dialogical coaches do both, collaborating with teachers to set and reach goals and facilitate a back-and-forth conversation by using well-thought out questions (Knight, 2018).

In summary, a partnership approach is a manner of coaching that centers around conversation, relationship, problem-solving, equal value between participants, respect, reflection, unlocking learners’ wisdom, autonomy, and choice. Coaching is best described by Toll (2014) as influence. She argued that it is not the coach’s role to coerce or force teachers to change, rather to build a relationship with that teacher and in partnership explore solutions to problems to enhance student learning through guided conversations and providing a few ideas and resources (Toll, 2014). In my opinion, this type of coaching approach would be perfect for this district’s secondary school.

**Summary**

In summary, the project design followed these best practices reflected in the studies provided by evidence. The capstone project chosen was a coherent, ongoing, long-term PD program. A workshop would be provided where administrators and teachers come together to be introduced to and learn about the new concepts in a chunked, engaging manner. Then, teachers would have an opportunity to try out the new concepts in their classrooms and come together with colleagues on a regular basis to collaborate, share, reflect, and receive feedback from coaches who use the partnership approach. The coaches continue teachers’ growth on the objective of the program by guiding conversations through thoughtful open-ended questions individually and in discipline specific groups.
The four segments selected for the PD were pre-work, workshop, coaches, and post-work. Teachers and administrators participate in the PD in two segments which are the workshop and the ongoing, long-term coaching program. These components were necessary in answering the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?*

The following topic reviews the context where the PD program is envisioned to take place. The topic includes the setting and audience for the program implementation.

**Context**

**Setting**

The school where the PD will be provided is a rural district in the Midwest part of the United States. This district’s philosophy is dedicated to a continuous improvement plan, teaching the whole child, and collaboration with the community. The following district description came from chapter one and was as follows:

According to the DOE (2020), student enrollment in the district of my employment for the 2019-2020 school year had a racial mix of 92% indicating white, 3.2% indicating Hispanic or Latino, 0.6% indicating American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.6% indicating Asian, 0.5% indicating African American, and 3.1% indicating two or more race. In addition, the DOE (2020) reported that .6% of the student body were of English Learner status, 14.8% were receiving Special Education, 29.2% were receiving free or reduced lunch, and 1.7% were homeless. This report stated that 39% of the high schoolers did not meet the standards in reading according to the DOE (2019) District Benchmark performance report. According to a report
edited by McKinnon, E. (personal communication, 2020) reported that 1,053 high school students were in attendance for the 2019-2020 school year. (p. 12)

The high school in which the PD is to be implemented had other attributes which made it optimal for this programming. For example, the district and school have a continuous improvement plan and a collaborative routine between teachers and administration. The school already has Student Learning Teams with three literacy specific goals being the following: move toward a guaranteed, coherent, and viable curriculum, deepen use of the school’s model of instruction, and foster authentic literacy across content areas. In addition to the goals set by the district, the ELA department high school had implemented an ELA in the Content Areas initiative where content area teachers were tasked with providing students with a specific ELA assignment in their classroom. Since the school in which this program was implemented was already using Marzano Resources methods and initiatives (Marzano Resources, 2020) which included the use of coaches, it was anticipated that the process using RCSI coaches would be building on prior experiences. The details of these experiences were described below in the subtopic titled, Teachers, under the topic of Audience. The administrators of this school were also described under the topic of Audience.

**Audience**

The audience for the PD is the content area classroom teachers of the secondary school and the administrators involved with the systematic PD program.

**Teachers.** According to the DOE (2019) the secondary school has 47.54 teachers, 23 of whom had advanced degrees. The teachers in this school had experience in
implementing some RCSI in the 2019-2020 school year in the form of ELA in the content area initiative provided by the English department.

The school-wide effort was for content area teachers to assign a reading passage for students to practice evaluating author’s claim (J. Josephs, personal communication, May 18, 2020), The goals of the activity was for students to improve in the tasks of analyzing arguments for main points, identifying effectiveness of message consistency, and making inferences (L. Bell, May 20, 2020). This ELA in the Content Area classroom was led by the ELA department of the school. First, teachers received explanations of the goals of the assignment. Next, facilitators showed the teachers how students should complete the assignment. Then, teachers were led in a guided activity where teachers were provided an article to read and analyze arguments. Teachers were divided into small groups to discuss the article and show that they could evaluate the author’s claim (J. Josephs, personal communication). Facilitators suggested teachers use these guiding practices, however, they left it to the teacher to discern the best approach. Finally, data revealed that student performance on evaluating the author’s claim improved through the implementation of the ELA in the content area initiative (J. Josephs, personal communication, 2020). I inferred from the content area teachers’ experiences with the school-wide reading comprehension activities that the teacher population had background information on and evidence of effectiveness for this type of activity. This made me more confident that the teachers could be more open to receiving this training and information on RCSI.

A pre-assessment is planned to be conducted using Google Forms (2008) to gather additional information about the level of background knowledge teachers had on reading comprehension strategy and the instruction thereof. The survey asks questions to
determine the level of interest in RCSI, understanding around teachers’ obligation to
students’ reading proficiency, and amount of experience teachers have on reading
comprehension strategy instruction in the content area classroom. The results of this
assessment help set the specifications of the program.

**Administrators.** One administrator from the high school and one administrator
with a focus on literacy from the teaching and learning department from the district office
were requested to be present. Other administrators and teachers from other schools were
also welcomed to attend. Because of the program’s ongoing and long-term format and
collaborative nature, the district and the high school administrators need to provide a
level of commitment to RCSI in content area classrooms. “Schools need to make literacy
instruction a higher priority in core subjects by providing professional development”
(Williams, 2010 p. 1).

Administrators need to communicate their commitment to teachers for three main
reasons. The first reason is to demonstrate their confidence in the evidence reflected in
the foundational guiding beliefs that content area teachers have a responsibility to help
build students’ reading proficiency, complex text must be used in the disciplinary
classroom, and that RCSI helps create independent adolescent readers. Secondly,
administrators need to address roadblocks to RCSI that teachers have such as the feeling
that teachers do not have time in their curriculum to teach strategy instruction. Thirdly,
administrators need to help facilitate and create the systematic RCSI PD program. The
program requires resources such as facility needs, coaching staff hour and training,
ongoing training for teachers, and training materials such as books.

**Summary**
In summary, this is a school climate where the district goals are laced with literacy and the ELA department is proactive in providing content area teachers support in meeting ELA CCSS. Reflecting on these two items, I anticipate that the teachers and administration are more likely to be open to the discussion of implementing reading comprehension strategy instruction in the content area classrooms. If a compelling case for strategy instruction influence on reading proficiency is made, I infer, then administrators and teachers will be more likely to implement its procedures.

**Professional Development (PD) Specifications**

The goal and objectives for the RCSI PD program were selected based on the four major themes revealed by answering the capstone questions *How can a systematic PD program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* Chapter two’s literature review identified four major themes which were that:

- students need RCSI in the content area secondary classroom,
- teachers need to use direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence in order for the strategy instruction to be effective,
- students need to frequently use complex text for their main source of learning in the disciplinary classroom, and
- teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully instruct reading comprehension strategies

The goal of the PD is to improve reading comprehension for secondary students. To reach this goal, five objectives were selected and are as follows:
1. to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,

2. to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,

3. to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,

4. to select complex text which is used for individual classes and enter it into the curriculum tracker for individual lessons, and

5. to provide teachers with ongoing, long-term RCSI development using similar discipline specific coaches.

The program design includes the goal, the five objectives, and the professional development best practices revealed in the program rationale topic. Through the process of the program, coaches, content area teachers, and administrators would become cognizant of how to teach the strategies with direct and explicit instruction and have an opportunity to practice them with their colleagues. Content area teachers would select complex text to be used in classrooms and build the scope and sequence which would be used departmental and school-wide. Teachers would have an opportunity to share and be introduced to new strategies and receive on-going training, reteaching, collaboration, and feedback. By creating a program based on the revelations in chapter two’s literature review and best practices for a professional development program, it is hypothesized that the systematic RCSI PD program would reach its goal of improving reading comprehension for secondary students.
The four segments to meet the objectives of the program were named pre-work, workshop, coaching and collaboration, and post-work and are described as follows:

1. **Pre-work**: Presentation to teaching and learning administrators, selection and pre-training for RCSI coaches, pre-survey (teachers) pre-assessment (students). The purpose of the pre-work is to get a better understanding of student, teacher, and administrators background knowledge and experience pertaining to the topic of RCSI.

2. **Workshop**: A workshop is provided for secondary teachers and a few administrators and led by facilitators. The purpose of the workshop is to partially meet the first four program objectives.

3. **Coaching and collaboration**: On-going and long-term coaching, reflection, and collaboration with professional learning groups. The purpose of this segment is to continue the objectives of the workshop, complete the final objective, and to develop and retain RCSI fidelity.

4. **Post-work**: The segment includes a post-survey to the content area teacher and administrators. It also includes a post-assessment for the students to test the program’s effectiveness of raising students’ reading proficiency. The purpose of the post-work is to collect data on the program’s effectiveness and to make any course corrections deemed necessary to improve the program. The post-work is conducted by the coaches and the details can be found in a section called School Services.

The outline and description of the entire RCSI PD Program and lesson plan are found in the Appendices and is titled *Overview of the RCSI PD Program (Lesson Plan)* (see
Appendix B). The appendix includes the capstone project’s themes, goal and objectives, segments of the PD, and the list of activities involved to meet the objectives. The segments are described in further detail in the subsequent subtopics, including the individual parts which make up each segment. The program in its entirety is provided as appendices. The segments of the PD respond to the themes answered by the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?*

**Segment 1: Pre-Work**

As mentioned in the overview of this topic, the first segment involves a presentation to Teaching & Learning administration, the High School principal, and key ELA staff. The purpose of the presentation is to obtain approval for the implementation of the program, procure funding, set the timeline for the program launch and implementation, and recruit an administrator for partners for the program. With the approval of the administration the remaining pre-work should be completed. Pre-work also includes selection and pre-training for RCSI coaches, pre-survey (teachers), pre-assessment (students), setting up logistics for the workshop and coaching program. The purpose of the pre-work is to secure administration’s commitment to the program and its guiding beliefs. The pre-work is also to get a better understanding of student, teacher, and administrators background knowledge and experience pertaining to the topic of RCSI (p. 63) and to set up logistics for the workshop and the coaching program.

The presentation to the key staff and administrators includes a presentation called *The RCSI Systematic PD Program Presentation to Administrators* (see Appendix C),
which has three objectives. The first is to convince them through the evidence found in the literature review of the importance of reading proficiency for secondary students and that it must be made a priority in the content area classroom. The second is that the developed systematic PD program through direct and explicit RCSI could help students raise their proficiency level. The third is for administrators to consider the costs and time investment that the program would require.

The purpose of the pre-work is to get a better understanding of student, teacher, and administrators background knowledge and experience pertaining to the topic of RCSI (p. 63). A Google Form (2008) titled RCSI Literacy Coach Selection Questions (see Appendix D) is planned to be used by the facilitators and administrators to select coaches. The purpose of the application is to determine if the teachers selected possess the characteristics necessary as laid out in the coaching program. These characteristics are described in detail in the Coaching and Collaboration section. Once RCSI coaches are selected, they are trained in two major areas: RCSI and coaching. The details of their training are also outlined in the Coaching and Collaboration section and.

An initial survey, titled RCSI in the Content Area Classroom Pre-Survey (see Appendix E) was designed using Google Form (2008) to measure teacher’s background knowledge of RCIS. The purpose of this survey was to customize the workshop to meet the background knowledge and experience of the teachers. Two facilitators were planned to lead a workshop called, RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation, (RCSI PD program, see Appendix F) and RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation Guide (see supplemental material) using the presentation program, Google Slides (2006). This visual aid was created because Knowles (1992) stressed the
importance of engaging the participants at a PD and suggested using a visual aid such as a slide show. The pre-assessment of students for the strategy use of summarizing, **Assessment Template Example** (see Appendix G) was planned to be conducted by the content area teacher once the workshop segment is completed. The examples are for Social Studies and Science only and the templates are planned to be adapted by the other disciplines for use.

In summary, the purpose of the pre-work is to procure program permission and funding, get a better understanding of teacher and administrators background knowledge and experience pertaining to the topic of RCSI, recruit key partners, and set the stage for the program launch. The next topic, Segment Two: Workshop, is divided into the objectives that are planned to be addressed in the workshop and the activities which were planned to help the participants partially meet each objective.

**Segment 2: Workshop**

The purpose of the workshop segment was to partially meet these objectives:

- to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility and
- to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction.

It was determined that meeting the objectives of the program would take longer than just a one-time workshop, so the success criteria for the objectives is for participants to gain a basic understanding of these objectives but may still have many questions about them.

The workshop segment would also partially meet the objectives:
• to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker and
• to select complex text to be used for individual classes.

It was determined that meeting these objectives would also be on-going with the coaching segment of the RCSI program. The development would require more time than what would be allotted for the workshop segment.

Assessment. The first four objectives are partially met through participation in the activities designed for the workshop. The final step of each activity serves as an assessment for participant learning of that activity and is indicated by the word finally. Facilitators observe and collect data to determine if the participants are meeting or partially meeting each objective. Facilitators can adjust pacing of the presentation based on the speed with which the participants meet each objective. Activities summarized in the subtopics to follow. Activities are explained in detail in RCSI RD Program Activities Manual and Presentation (see Appendix F) and RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation Guide (see supplemental material).

Objective One Activities: Building Guiding Belief Activities. The purpose for building guiding beliefs about student proficiency and RCSI was determined necessary so that all participants would become fully committed to the program’s objectives. The guiding beliefs of the program founded on the literature review from Chapter Two are as follows:

• Reading proficiency profoundly affects an individual’s lifetime success (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NIL, 2007; Wolfe & Haveman, 2001; Yagelski, 2000).
• Content area teachers have a responsibility to help build students’ reading proficiency (CCSS, 2020, J. Josephs, personal communication, May 18, 2020).

• RCSI helps create independent adolescent readers and is most effective when provided in the content area classroom (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Boardman, et al., 2008; Ceedar Center, 2013; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Gabriel et al., 2016; Kamil et al., 2008; Moje, 2007; Ness, 2008; NIL, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012).

• RCSI needs to be direct and explicit in order to be effective (AFT, 2014; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Boardman, et al., 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Kamil et al., 2008; Green, n.d.; NIL, 2007; Ness, 2008; Nokes & Dole, 2004 Roehler & Duffy, 1984; McEwan, 2007; Warner, n.d).

• Complex text must frequently be used in the disciplinary classroom as a form of instruction (Adams, 2010; AFT, 2014; Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Armbruster, 2001; CCSS, 2020; J. Burling, personal communication, May 2019; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Glass, 2015; Gomez & Gomez, 2007; NIL 2007; A. Prepperanau, personal communication, June 11, 2020; Schmoker, 2018; Shanahan, 2020)

• Teachers needed to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully learn and implement RCSI in the classroom (Brown et al., 1996; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008 as cited in Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010; Knight, 2018; Heineke, 2013; K. Killorn, personal communication, June 9, 2020; S. Manikowski, personal communication, March 2020; Marzano, 2013; Moats, 2002; NIL, 2007; Saaris, 2017; Toll 2015).
There are four activities planned to meet the objective of building a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility. These activities are as follows:

**Activity One: Defining Terms Discussion Activity.** The first step of building the foundational guiding beliefs is to come to an agreement of term definitions between the facilitators and the participations. This is done to avoid any confusion or misconceptions during any discourse or discussion pertaining to RCSI. The [RCSI PD Definitions](#) were prepared for use (see Appendix H) and participants would be given a few minutes to read through them. The facilitators ask participants if they have any wonderings about the definitions provided. It is anticipated that participants would have some comments about some of the terms. Facilitators clarify briefly and let participants know that many of the definitions should become clearer during the process of the workshop.

**Activity Two: Background Information Online Game Activity Using Kahoot!** *(Brand, 2013).* The second step of building foundational guiding beliefs has two goals. The first goal is to allow teachers the opportunity to showcase what they already know about reading proficiency and RCSI. The second goal is to fill in missing knowledge about or clear up any misconception teachers may have about reading proficiency and RCSI.

The online activity called [Building Background Information using Kahoot!](#) (see Appendix I) which is a game based educational learning technology, Kahoot! *(Brand, 2013)*, was determined to be the best format to accomplish these two goals. In this activity, teachers are asked to work in pairs to answer the timed, multiple choice questions which help build background knowledge for all participants to reach agreement
on the foundational guiding beliefs. Information about each question using references was prepared so that facilitators could provide evidence for the answers (see Appendix I). The questions and answers in the activity were designed to build the foundational guiding beliefs that proficiency profoundly affects an individual’s lifetime success, that content area teachers have a responsibility to help build students’ reading proficiency, complex text must be used in the disciplinary classroom, and that RCSI helps create independent adolescent readers.

**Activity Three: Background Information Discussion Activity.** The purpose of this activity is to give participants an opportunity to discuss, share, and reflect on what they already knew and what they learned during the previous activity. The guiding questions for the reflection are in the [RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation](#) (see Appendix F, slide 9). Facilitators monitor and gather formative assessment of participants understanding thus far of the program’s guiding beliefs.

**Activity Four: Addressing Roadblocks Activity.** The third step of building the foundational guiding beliefs is for facilitators to address teachers’ roadblocks to teaching reading strategies. Research revealed that some of the roadblocks to be expected were the feeling of lack of responsibility, necessity, unpreparedness, and lack of time in the curriculum (Boardman et al., 2007; Cantrell, et al., 2008; Hellen & Greenleaf, 2007; Ness, 2008).

In the Road to RCSI activity, teachers are randomly grouped together and given post-it notes and markers (see Appendix F, slide 10). They are asked to write one roadblock that they as content area teachers have to RCSI. The group uses a separate sticky note for each roadblock. Then, all participants would get up and organize like
roadblocks together in groupings. For example, if one sticky note said, *We don’t feel qualified*, and another said, *We were not trained to give reading instruction*”, they are placed close to one another on a wall in the room because these two statements are expressing the feeling of not being qualified to instruct reading comprehension strategies. Participants are asked to make a one statement sign communicating all the statements in a grouping.

Reflecting on the audience of this district, it is anticipated that one of the roadblocks could be that teachers feel overwhelmed by trying to fit another initiative into their already tight curriculum schedules. As a teacher, I often feel overwhelmed by new initiatives or tasks required by the administration or other committees. I also can feel a sense of anxiety if what is being asked of me is new or unfamiliar. Responses to roadblocks should be prepared by the teaching and learning staff prior to the workshop after receiving data from the pre-survey (see Appendix E) sent to those who would participate in the program.

The purpose of this activity was to narrow the concerns of the teachers to three to four roadblocks, so that they can be addressed by administration. Using the statements above, for example, the participants made a one statement sign which read, *Unqualified to Teach Reading Comprehension Strategies*. Facilitators would assure participants that each of these roadblocks would be addressed in the course of the professional development workshop. Finally, facilitators show Guiding Beliefs (see Attachment F, slides 11-16) to take any further comments or questions on the guiding beliefs.

**Summary.** In summary, the purpose of the activities to meet objective one was to ground participants beliefs in the RCSPI PD program. The guiding beliefs based on the
themes of the literature review are as follows:

- Reading proficiency profoundly affects an individual’s lifetime success,
- content area teachers have a responsibility to help build students’ reading proficiency
- RCSI helps create independent adolescent readers and is most effective when provided in the content area classroom,
- RCSI needs to be direct and explicit in order to be effective,
- complex text must frequently be used in the disciplinary classroom as a form of instruction, and
- Teachers needed to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully learn and implement RCSI in the classroom.

It is imperative that participants gain a mutual agreement of the importance of reading proficiency and RCSI for the program to be a success. A reprioritization for RCSI school-wide must occur and participants must be convicted of the importance and value of the instruction in the secondary classroom (Hall, 2005). The purpose of the activity is to create awareness around teachers’ role and responsibility for students’ reading proficiency and gain the teacher’s commitment to the professional development training, implementation of RCSI and complex text use in the classrooms. The use of authentic, complex text must be preserved and used in the classroom (Schmoker, 2011) and the loss of its use in the classroom must be made cognizant.

Building foundational guiding beliefs around RCSI for content area teachers and administrators was deemed necessary to develop full commitment for strategy instruction in the content area classroom. The four steps developed for this implementation were
defining terms, building background knowledge, addressing teachers’ roadblocks, and program description.

**Objective Two Activities: Direct and Explicit Strategy Instruction.** The second objective developed for the professional development was based on a theme from the literature review which stated that in order for students to successfully use reading comprehension strategies, they must have knowledge of the strategy’s use on a declarative, procedural, and conditional level (see Appendix F, slide 17-18). These levels of knowledge, the studies showed, are best obtained when the teacher used direct and explicit strategy instruction (Afflerbach, 2002; Dole & Pearson, 1987; Nokes & Dole, 2004; Duffy, 2002), Roehler & Duffy, 1984). Facilitators explain declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge using Appendix F, slide 18.

The RCSI program is described by the facilitators to the participants using an onion analogy as seen in the document name *Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Onion* (see Appendix A; see Appendix F, slide 19). The process used to transfer this knowledge from the teachers to the students, called direct and explicit instruction, would be taught to teachers during the workshop.

There are four activities planned in order to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction. The direct and explicit instruction objective was designed based McEwan’s (2007) book *40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms. Grades 6-12*. If possible, every participant should be provided a copy of the book as a reference for the three-year RCSI professional development program. The following subtopics describe the activities used during this workshop to partially meet the objective of providing teachers training,
collaboration and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction. The first set of activities build background knowledge about reading strategies. The second part describes direct instruction, when students build their declarative knowledge about the strategy. The third part includes explicit instruction activities when students build their procedural and conditional knowledge about the strategy. The RCSI transfers the responsibility of strategy use to the student, so that, they become independent readers.

**Activity One: Strategies, Supports, and Activities.** The purpose of this activity is to activate what participants already know about, come to a deeper understanding about, and to clear up any misconceptions about strategies, supports, and activities (see Appendix F, slide 20). Table groups are supplied with a large piece of paper. The paper is divided into three columns with headers stating: strategies, supports, activities. The table partners brainstorm a list of acts they perform or have their students perform in order to access comprehension from text in their classrooms. Then, participants are asked to classify the act in columns under the appropriate headers: strategy, support, or activity. Participants negotiate and discuss their justification while they classify the act. The deeper understanding of the definitions for strategy, support, and activity come to light as groups share. Whereas some acts could be classified under more than one header, the goal of the activity is for participants to shift their paradigm about strategies.

It is important that participants come to an understanding that the goal of the reading comprehension strategies in the RCSI program is for students to employ strategies in an independent and cognizant manner. An example of a support would be a read aloud application or a graphic organizer provided by the teacher. An example of an activity would be a teacher organized or led discussion, guided reading, or reciprocal
teaching activity. It is important to note to participants at this time that think aloud, guided practice activities, and more independent practices are used in explicit instruction in order to scaffold students until they become independent strategy users.

**Activity Two: Negotiate the Strategy List.** The purpose of this activity is for participants to come to agreement on strategy names and their definitions. It is anticipated that the list of strategies which were brainstormed in Activity One: Strategies, Supports, and Activities will be close to the Seven Strategies of the RCSI Program (adapted from “Instructional Aid 1.1 Seven Strategies of Highly Effective Readers” by E. K. McEwan, 2007, 40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms. Grades 6-12, p. 3. Copyright 2007 by Corwin Press; see Appendix J) and are as follows: activate, infer, monitor-clarify, question, search-select, summarize, and visualize-organize. It is also anticipated that some of the words from activity one will be synonymous or close to in meaning to the ones in this list. Facilitators must also be prepared that teachers may want to use their own strategies. The program allows for this choice with the help of the coach. Researchers Kamil et al. (2008), argued that the specific strategies which are selected are less important than the engagement with the strategies through direct and explicit instruction.

Teachers are provided referred to Seven Strategies of the RCSI Program (see Appendix J). Participants work in table groups: they respond to, reflect on, and edit definitions for their group’s strategy list. The group uses the questions in the RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation (see Appendix F, slide 21).

The instructional aid provided in this activity is a working example and needs to be adapted to meet the school’s environment and program’s objectives. For example, the
teachers may prefer to change the strategy name, *activating*, to *activating background knowledge*, because this term is better understood in this school. Teachers may wish to also change the wording in the definition column to better align with school norms of teaching that strategy. This process may take time and cannot be rushed. The purpose of this part of the activity is to provide teachers a sense of control, choice, and creative input into the program (C. Nolte, personal communication, June 24, 2020; Saaris, 2017).

Finally, table groups share any changes to the strategies name or definitions they would like to make, and any thoughts or ideas they had while considering the guiding questions. Coordinators of the program compile this information and make any changes deemed appropriate to the a master copy of the *Seven Strategies of the RCSI Program* (see Appendix J).

**Activity Three: Direct Instruction Discussion and Role Play.** This is conducted in three parts: definition, non-example and example.

First, the facilitators have a volunteer read the definitions of direct and explicit instruction from the *RCSI PD Definitions* (see Appendix H, para 6, 7). In direct instruction, the teacher names, defines, describes, and discusses the strategy and its use so that students develop declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge needed for use on an independent metacognitive level (p. 33). Explicit instruction means that the teacher provides overt modeling of the steps to employ the independent strategy use and the conditions where the strategy would be useful to aid in reading comprehension. Researchers McEwan (2015), NIL (2007), and Nokes and Dole (2004) divided explicit instruction into three parts including teacher modeling, guided practice, and independent practice (p. 33).
Next, facilitators go through the steps of the direct instruction lesson plan including the type of knowledge which that step builds. These steps have been adapted from McEwan (2007) and are as follows:

- Name, define, and describe the strategy (declarative).
- Explain the purpose of the strategy and how it is useful for reading comprehension (conditional).
- Describe the important attributes of the strategy and how it can be modified for different situations. (conditional).
- State the steps in using the strategy (procedural).
- Provide examples and non-examples of its use (declarative, procedural, and conditional).

Finally, facilitators stress the importance of all these steps to building declarative, procedural, conditional knowledge which enables the student to independently use the strategy for independent comprehension. Facilitators answer any questions participants may have on these steps and then proceed to the next part.

Secondly, facilitators roleplay a non-example of teachers skipping the direct instruction of a strategy instruction. There is a misconception that if teachers skip the direct instruction, but see the strategy in action, students will know how to employ the strategy. The script for the non-example of direct instruction is called, Example and Non-Example Direct Instruction Script (see Appendix K). This is incorrect and must be made clear in the presentation of this activity. Then, teachers are provided a good example of direct instruction using (see Appendix K).
Facilitators model the instruction of *activating* using direct instruction as if the teachers were students in a classroom. Facilitators take their time with this explanation, pausing to ask if anyone needs any clarifications. The reason this strategy is chosen is that it is important that participants see the difference between teacher-led activities and transferring responsibility to the students. In the school where the PD is scheduled to take place, it is the culture for the teacher to lead activating through activities or direct instruction, but not to teach students how to activate for themselves. A gradual release of strategy use responsibility must take place from teacher to student through scaffold activities. The purpose of the second part of this activity is for participants to gain appreciation for the depth of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge that the student requires in order to cognitively use the strategy.

Finally, teachers respond to two questions with their table partners regarding direct instruction: *What is the purpose of direct instruction? How is this similar or different to your experience? What is declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge?* The purpose of this turn and talk is to deepen teachers’ understanding of the importance of direct instruction. The group comes back together to share out reflections.

*Activity Four: Modeled Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script.* The purpose of this activity is for departments to create the direct instructions for one of the strategies and make it available in the collaborative folder so that all teachers have access to the created resource. This way, teachers feel they are actively engaged and create something that will authentically be used.

First, the facilitator models how they created the script for the strategy of *activating*. The facilitator tells participants that the first step was to read the
corresponding chapter in McEwan’s (2007) book 40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms. Grades 6-12 (in this case it was Chapter Three, p. 13-17). Next, the facilitator verbalizes their cognitive processes of how they connected what they read, to what they already knew and had experienced about their strategy using a think-aloud. The facilitator acknowledges that teachers already use this process to model for their students in the classroom, and that, the facilitator will be modeling it for them for this next part. Then, the facilitator verbalize how they were thinking while they wrote the script of what they would say when directly instructing the strategy of activating.

**Activity Five: Practice Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script.** Participants are organized in discipline similar groups. First, groups select one of the seven strategies from the Seven Strategies of the RCSI Program (see Appendix J). Next, participants read the corresponding chapter from McEwan’s (2007) book 40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms Grades 6-12, consult other resources, and confer with colleagues about the strategy. The page numbers for the corresponding strategy can be found in Appendix J. Then, discipline groups negotiate and write out the script for the teaching the cognitive strategy they selected. The lesson plan template Template for RCSI Lesson Plan (see Appendix L), should be prepared by the facilitators in the schools’ domain and shared in a folder using Google Docs (www.google.com) so that all teachers have access. Each group will make a copy of the document to fill out.

Participants may use other resources in addition to the assigned reading if they still need further clarification of a strategy’s use and definition. Facilitators and coaches actively check in with groups while they are writing their direct instruction scripts to offer ideas,
guidance, and feedback. Finally, a representative from each table group is asked to share out the direct instruction of their strategy to the whole group.

Finally, the activity wraps up with table groups responding to the reflection questions: *What was easy for you to do in this activity? What part of writing the script was challenging? In what ways did your understanding of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge shift?*

**Activity Six: Building Background Knowledge for Explicit Instruction Jigsaw.**

The purpose for this activity is that all participants express a mutual understanding of the parts of explicit instruction:

- Modeling the use of the strategy using the thinking aloud format.
- Guided practice provided by the teacher.
- Independent practice with teacher feedback and supervision.

This format is also called I Do It, We Do It, You Do It, (McEwan, 2007, p. 66).

Teachers in this district already have experience with explicit instruction and this format (A. Preppernau (personal communication, June 2020) and should be able to apply what they already know and adapt many of the activities which are used to help students learn content for RCSI. The information for this activity can be found in the RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation (see Appendix F, slides 28-31) and RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation Guide (see supplemental material).

This workshop activity is conducted in four steps. First, table groups are asked to read certain chapters which help build background knowledge corresponding to explicit instruction from McEwan’s (2007) book *40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms. Grades 6-12*. The chapters are as follows: Chapter Two (*Engage in...*
Teacher and Student Think-Alouds Daily, p. 7-12). Chapter Fourteen (Use the I Do It, We Do It, You Do It Lesson Plan, p. 63-66), and Chapter Fifteen (Provide Models, Example, and Nonexamples, p. 67-70). Individuals read silently to themselves. Next, after table groups read their chapter, table groups discuss and prepare to share out the following response from reading their chapter: What was the main purpose of the chapter? How does this action fit into explicit instruction? What additional information or experience can connect to what you read? Then, teachers stand up and find two people in the room who read different chapters from themselves. In a trio, each participant shares their reflection of the chapter they read. Finally, the facilitators lead a wrap up discussion to have participants share out any interesting bits of conversation which may have arisen as results of the activity.

Activity Seven: Modeling Explicit Instruction Role Play. The purpose of this activity is for teachers to see a strategy explicitly instructed and to reflect on their experience with explicit instruction in the classroom. Facilitators continue the lesson of activating, which was started earlier in the direct instruction part of the workshop. Facilitators warn the participants that this activity is role-play and they are to imagine that they are the students in a classroom, and that the facilitator is the teacher. Facilitators instruct participants and use teacher’s best practices such as checking for understanding, providing opportunities for students to monitor their own learning, and providing feedback (Glass, 2015). Teacher’s best practices are subject to school and district policy and are not limited to this list.

First, facilitators model the use of the strategy using think-aloud while using complex text from their curricula. Next, facilitators provide guided and independent
activities so that teachers experience using the strategy with the provided guided and independent practices. Then, teachers and facilitators come out of role playing to have an authentic conversation about explicit instruction. The facilitators explain and demonstrate how they used four elements to pick and adapt the guiding and independent activities for RCSI. There were follows:

- Draw from experience of helping access students comprehend text,
- reference McEwan’s, (2007) or resources on that strategy,
- conferring with colleagues, PLCs, and coaches, and
- use the RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier (the activity verifier, see Appendix M) to ensure that the selected activities were used or adapted to scaffold students to independent strategy use.

Finally, teachers discuss reflect in disciplinary groups: How does this format help students read? How is this similar or different to what you believe to be true about explicit instruction? If you were to edit this plan, what would you change?

**Activity Eight: Building a List of Activities.** The purpose of this independent practice of explicit instruction is for teachers to brainstorm a list of guided and independent strategy practice activities. Teachers learn how to adapt activities using the four elements including using RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier (see Appendix M). Facilitators let teachers know that often it is easier to pick out the complex text use before picking the activities. However, the facilitators wanted participants to start a communal list of activities prior to the discussion of complex text. So, this may feel a bit disjointed.
First, teachers are divided in discipline groups and refer to the direct instruction lesson plan that they had already worked on in the previous part of the workshop. Next, using the first three elements of picking and adapting activities for RCSI and other resources, small groups negotiate and confer on which activities would best provide students’ practice with that strategy. It is anticipated that teachers already have many activities from experiences that can be adapted for RCSI already. Next, using the **RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier** (see Appendix M) discipline groups determine if the activity supports the strategy instruction or if the activity needs to be adapted. Activities are entered in the **RCSI Guided and Independent Activity List** (Appendix N) so that teachers collectively build a resource for each other. In this list, teachers have an opportunity to rate the level of guidance or independence the activity affords from one to five. For example, if an activity would require heavy guidance from the teacher, the activity would be rated as guided – 1. Another example would if an activity is highly adaptable for guided and independent practice with varying levels of teacher support, the activity would be rated guided and independent with no numbers indicating a specific level. Finally, in trios from different disciplines, each teacher shares their PLC’s activities.

**Objective Three Activities: Complex Text Use.** There are two activities planned in order to select complex text which is used for individual lessons. There are two activities planned to help participants partially meet this objective: Decoding Complex Text

**Activity One: Decoding Complex Text.** The purpose of this activity is to come to a comprehensive and mutual understanding of *complex text* and its use in the disciplinary
It is also the purpose of the activity to build a list of types and examples of complex text so that teachers have a resource to use in the future. The resource used for this activity is Complex Text Decoded Chapter One by Glass, 2015 (as cited by ASCD.org).

First, teachers are asked to organize themselves into groups with a discipline representative in each group. Each group is assigned a different section to read. The groupings expose at least one person from each discipline to the information in each section. The sections are as follows:

- Complex Text and Disciplinary Literacy
- What is Complex Text?
- What Standards Address Text Complexity?
- Who Should Teach Complex Text?
- Why Is It Important to Engage Students in Complex Text?
- What Does Close Reading Mean?
- Closing (Glass, 2015)

Next, one participant volunteers to take notes for the small group. Participants are provided the following task and guiding question to discuss in their groups and prepare for a share out: **Provide a summary of your section. How does the section align with your current belief about complex text? How does this section challenge your current belief? What other reactions or ideas did the group have? What are some examples and non-examples of written complex text?** A live Google Doc (www.google.com, 2008) is provided so that the school can build a list of different types of complex texts in a document called Complex Text Tracker (see Appendix O) so that teachers authentically
create a resource for the future. Then, a different volunteer from the notetaker reports on their discussion and a few examples to the whole group. Finally, the whole group reviews the working definition of complex text to see if it should be revised based on the new understanding of the term. It is important that the group comes to a mutual understanding of the phrase complex text and has a comprehensive list of examples to use as a resource.

Activity Two: Explicit Instruction Lesson Plan with Complex Text. The purpose of this activity is for teachers to create and practice delivering the explicit instruction lesson plan section of the Template for RCSI Lesson Plan (see Appendix L) using complex text from a class they are teaching. Teachers are to sit in discipline grouping and may work individually or in a group. The steps are as follows RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation (see Appendix F, slide 39).

1. Think of a complex text from a class (you may work individually or in groups).
2. Continue working on building the lesson from the Write Your Own Direct Lesson Plan Activity using Template for RCSI Lesson Plan (see Appendix L). Teachers may choose to use a different strategy if they wish. Think of some modeling, guided, and independent activities.
3. Use the RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier (see Appendix M) to check to make sure the activities that you have chosen scaffold students toward independent use of a reading strategy.
4. Plan a direct and explicit strategy instruction lesson plan using the complex text selected.
5. Practice you lesson plan with at least one other person or group.
Enter the activities into the RCSI Guided and Independent Activity List (Appendix N) and the complex text into Complex Text Tracker (see Appendix O) to create resources for future reference. This is activity is done with input from the coach in order to retain direct and explicit strategy instruction fidelity.

Facilitators stress the three essential parts of explicit instruction lesson plan which are the following:

1. Model the use of the strategy using thinking aloud format (I do). Teachers should write out what they would say in order to model the use of the strategy with that complex text.

2. Guided practice (We do). Teachers describe as many activities as they feel are necessary in order to scaffold students with more independence.

3. Independent practice (You do). Teachers describe at least one activity that shows that the student can employ the strategy for comprehension of complex text.

Facilitators cue teachers to refer to the four elements, the newly created activity list, or whatever resources they would like to select their activities. This make the activity more engaging for participants and make them more invested in learning because teachers see the use and value of what they are doing in the professional development workshop (Saaris, 2017). Facilitators and coaches actively engage the groups as they work on this task so that they can offer teachers guidance and feedback as needed. Finally, teachers are asked to share their lesson with one other group or person.

**Summary.** In summary, the Background Information Complex Text Decoded Activity and the Explicit Instruction Lesson Plan with Complex Text Activity help partially meet the objectives of to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice
opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction and to select complex text to be used in individual classes.

**Objective Four Activities: Scope and Sequence.** The purpose of this part of the workshop is to partially meet the objective of to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker. Its development and revision would be ongoing as teachers collaborate, and gain expertise and experience in strategy instruction. The scope and sequencing of RCSI was planned to be included in the district’s mapping curriculum technology called AtlasNext (Faria Educational Group, 2020). The complex text used for individual units and lessons would also be entered into this technology. In this way coherency of strategy instruction and complex text use is created school-wide. “Teams or departments should agree on a specific-and generous-number of quality ‘core texts’ for every course and grade level” (Schmoker, 2011, p. 136).

**Activity One: Model and Practice with Tracking Tool.** Disciplines determine which strategy they would like to use for which texts. The strategies should ramp-up in sophistication and the complex text should increase in Lexile as students advance through the grades. The curriculum tracker technology was scheduled for launch in the fall of 2020 in the school in which the program was to be implemented. For a specific unit being tracked in teachers would select from a list of complex text titles which have been pre-entered in the system by the department. The page number for the lesson is typed into a corresponding space. A strategy is selected from a drop-down list. The advantage of this format is that an overview of complex text and strategy use is available and can be analyzed by administrators, departments, teachers, and parents. A template of the tracker
is called Online Curriculum Tracking Tool (adapted from J. Town-Gunderson, personal communication, February 10, 2020, see Appendix P).

The strategies selected to be used during the professional development were activating, inferring, monitoring, clarifying, questioning, summarizing, visualizing-organizing (McEwan, 2007, p. 3). Researchers Pressley and Afflerbach (2007) found that good readers change the process that they use in response to the text they are reading. Therefore, students require a variety of strategies they can use to decipher challenging text. The seven strategies provided in the professional development program help students independently comprehend text by employing the different strategies in response to the text they read.

In this activity, participants have an opportunity to see where in the tracker they would be entering selecting the strategy and entering in the complex text into the technology.

In Summary. The objectives and the activities for the workshop segment were based the themes of the capstone question which read: How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? The of the RCSI PD program is to raise reading comprehension for secondary students. The objectives are as follows:

- to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
- to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
• to build a departmental and school wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker, and
• to select complex text which is used for individual classes and enter it into the curriculum tracker for individual lessons.

The second segment of the professional development continues the work of the first four objectives and fulfills the final objective which states:

• to provide teachers with ongoing, long-term RCSI development using coaches.

The implementation of a plan comparable to the one described is necessary to lay the foundation for the ongoing, long-term segment of the systematic RCSI PD program. Segment Three: Coaching and Collaboration uses coaches to continue the work started during the Segment Two: Workshop Segment and is described in detail in the next topic.

**Segment Three: Coaching and Collaboration**

Coaches continue the progress of the workshop segment by facilitating conversation with teachers and departments on an ongoing and long-term basis. As Gawande (2011) stated, “No matter how well-trained people are, few can sustain their best performance on their own. That’s where coaching comes in (p.1)” (as cited in Marzano et al., 2013, p. 3). Coaching means to move someone from where they are to where they need or want to be (Marzano et al., 2013). Researchers Cantrell et al. (2008) stated that professional development programs whose aim it was to encourage content area teachers to implement reading strategies in their classrooms needed to contain on-going training and support from those who have successfully used the target strategies.

The use of coaches responds to the capstone question "How can a systematic professional
development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? by providing teachers with support needed to systematically prepare for RCSI and complex text in their curriculum and provide teachers with ongoing, long-term support in the art of direct and explicit RCSI instruction.

The coaching segment topic is divided and described by the following subtopics: Coaching Role, Training, Coaching Conversations, Demonstrations, School Services, and Characteristics of a Coach. The coach’s primary responsibilities are conducting coaching conversations and demonstrations. Coaches are trained during a workshop, book study, webinar, and trimester collaboration with teachers. Coordinators of the program select coaches on character based on the merit of a resume and responses from open-ended questions. Coaches report on the program’s efficacy for the RCSI PD program to the partners. This report is based on conversations from teachers, data from surveys, and student assessment of proficiency. The design of this topic was based on The Literacy Coach’s Survival Guide: Essential Questions and Practical Answers (Toll, M., 2005, 2014) but also heavily influenced by The Impact Cycle (Knight, 2018), Coaching Classroom Instruction Model (Marzano et al., 2013).

**RCSI Coaching Role.** The primary role of the coach is to implement the initiatives of the RCSI PD Program. A literacy coach’s focus is to support teachers in meeting the goal and objectives of the RCSI PD program. Since this is an objective based program, some may argue that this role should be called program implementer instead of coach because the focus is on the goal and objectives, not the teacher’s growth (Toll, 2006). I
would argue that it focuses on both the program the teacher’s growth simultaneously and have therefore determined that the role should be called coach.

The goal of this PD is to improve reading comprehension for secondary students. Coaches assist teachers in meeting the five objectives of the RCSI PD program:

1. to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
2. to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
3. to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
4. to select complex text which is used for individual classes and enter it into the curriculum tracker for individual lessons, and
5. to provide teachers with ongoing, long-term RCSI development using similar discipline specific coaches.

The coach’s duty is to facilitate conversations with teachers and discipline groups to reveal their thinking, experiences, ideas, and reflection around RCSI and its use in their classroom. From these conversations, teachers build in RCSI into their curriculum, develop scope and sequencing of RCSI use, and select complex text to be used with the direct and explicit instruction. Conversations can lead to coach’s demonstrations of strategy instruction in the teachers’ classroom. The coach guides the conversations toward teachers’ RCSI goal setting and follow-up reflection from strategy use in the classroom. The coach’s success is for teachers to meet the learning objectives of the program, as revealed by success criteria indicators (which are discussed in detail in
Segment Four: Post-Work) and the data which the coach and teacher collect as evidence of student reading proficiency improvement.

RCSI literacy coaches are to use partnership approach to coaching or *partnership coaching*. Partnership coaching is where coaches and teachers or discipline specific groups engage in conversations to unpack, explore, and problem solve ways to meet the objectives of the RCSI PD program. Researcher and writer Knight (2018) and Toll (2015) provided principles of coaching which became the basis of the guiding principles for the RCSI literacy coach and they are as:

- the teachers choose which strategy and activities they would like to use; discipline specific groups choose which complex text and strategies would be guaranteed in the curriculum,
- the coach and teacher share ideas and resources, learn, and make decisions together as equal partners in the conversation,
- the coach writes, models, demonstrates good direct and explicit RCSI in the teacher’s classroom
- the coach is a listener first by using listeners’ best practices such as: listen first, pause, ask for more information, providing open-ended questions, non-judgmental responses, and eye-contact,
- the coach gently guides conversation toward goal and objectives and fostering teacher growth,
- the coach fosters true respect by focusing on building relationships (adapted from Corey & Bradley, 1998; Knight, 2018; Toll, 2015).
Writers Cory and Bradley (1998) described the coach’s role in the model of partnership coaching as assisting the teacher to obtain their goal through carefully crafting guiding questions so that the teacher may unpack their own learning. The purpose is to access the learner’s wisdom. (Cory & Bradley, 1998).

The RCSI PD program is *initiative based*, in that the coach is responsible for assisting teachers meet specific goals or objectives. The people being served by the coaches in this program are the teachers and their students, *the clients*. In addition to the role of coach to the teacher and discipline-specific groups, the coach plays the role of communicator to the partners. Because the PD is goal and objectives based, coaches have other partners. *The partners* include the administration of Teaching & Learning, the high school principal, the program coordinators, and key ELA staff members.

In summary, the RCSI literacy coach’s role is to help meet the goal and objectives of the program using the partnership approach. Through this approach, coaches facilitate conversations with individuals and discipline specific groups to unpack their own thinking and come to their own conclusions about to how to best implement direct and explicit strategy instruction for reading comprehension. The RCSI literacy coach has additional partners including the Teaching & Learning administrators, the high school principal, the program coordinator, and key ELA staff. It is the role of the coach to keep these additional partners informed of the progress toward the goal and objectives.

The responsibilities of the RCSI coach were developed from Toll’s (2006) *The Literacy Coach’s Desk Reference: Processes and Perspectives for Effective Coaching*. The RCSI literacy coach has four main tasks: personal training and preparation, coaching conversations (individual and discipline-specific groups), demonstrating lessons, and
school services. This section also includes responsibilities which do not belong to the RCSI literacy coach.

**Training.** The RCSI literacy coaching program requires personal coaching training in the RCSI PD program including crafting direct and explicit RCSI lesson plans and in the RCSI partnership coaching approach. The purpose of this training is to gain knowledge and create curiosity about the RCSI PD Program, the RCSI Literacy Coaching Method (including conducting meaningful conversations through open-ended questions), and ongoing training and collaboration for coaches.

**Training in RCSI Professional Development Program.** Facilitators and coaches preview the presentation [RCSI PD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation](#) (see Appendix F). The purpose of this is for coaches to have an opportunity to go through the process of creating RCSI direct and explicit lesson plans using the template, selecting complex text to use for the lesson, selecting and adapting lessons, using the activity verifier, and reflecting on the success and stumbling blocks of the implementation. During the preview, coaches use the following to guide note taking for a reflective conversation with facilitators:

- I still have a question about this. I think participants in the workshop will find this challenging.
- This is surprising information. I will need more evidence to buy into this belief.
- I am excited about this and this is why.
- This made me think of this.

The purpose of the workshop preview is to develop experience with using RCSI, not expertise. Educator and writer Toll (2014) explained that by learning with the coachee,
collaboration, mutual respect, and the relationship is enhanced. Facilitators conduct a conversation following the workshop to deepen coaches’ learning of the RCSI PD program. Previewing of the workshop also helps build background knowledge of the program in general. As it is the coach’s responsibility to be active in many parts of the workshop, it is important that they have had an opportunity to understand what will be required of them and to better serve participants during the actual workshop with the teachers.

Following the preview, coaches are asked to practice writing and implementing RCSI direct and explicit lessons in their classrooms prior to meeting with their coachees. The purpose of the classroom practices for coaches to have an opportunity to implement some strategies, reflect on and discuss about their implementation, and to be able to provide testimony to their coachees of the strategy’s effectiveness. The pre-practice allows coaches to collaborate, share ideas, and better prepare for their coachees.

**Training in RCSI Coaching Method.** Coaches receive training on the RCSI Coaching Method through three vehicles: a book study, a webinar, and coaching collaboration.

Coaches participate in a book study of the book: *The Literacy Coach’s Survival Guide: Essential Questions and Practical Answers* (Toll, 2014). This book study is to be conducted over six weeks period where coaches, once selected, meet virtually once a week. Every week they are assigned two chapters and are asked to answer the questions to ponder which is provided in the opening of each chapter. A book study leader facilitates the book study. The facilitator should be a RCSI PD program leaders so that
they are able to point out slight variations between the book study and the parameters of
the RCSI PD literacy coaching program.

The schedule guide is located in the Appendices in a document called Book Study
Schedule for RCSI Literacy Coaching (see Appendix Q). The book study is led by a book
study facilitator who is an expert in the RCSI PD program to ensure that any important
differences between the book and the program are pointed out. The book indicates which
documents and forms are needed for the program and are created in a cooperative manner
as instructed by the book study facilitator.

Because the RCSI literacy coaching program is based on conversations, an
additional training in conducting conversations is required by attending a webinar based
on the Better Conversation by Knight (2016) Better Conversations Webinar (Knight, led
by Hoffman (2020), written by Kelly (2020). This webinar highlights listener’s best
practices and talks attendees through how to conduct powerful conversations in which
both participants learn and grow. Coaches may wish to attend and to discuss the webinar
in their last session of the book study.

Coaches collaborate with each other program coordinators in a Trimester RCSI
Literacy Coach Collaboration Meeting and work toward meeting or partially literacy
coaching objectives. The objectives of the RCSI literacy coach continuing education are
as follows:

- Literacy coaches learn and share how to encourage participation
- Literacy coaches learn and share how to do a successful in-class
demonstration
- Literacy coaches learn and share how to craft good open-ended questions
• Literacy coaches learn and share how to collect and interpret the data
• Literacy coaches learn and share how to navigate resistance.

Trimester meetings are planned to be conducted in small workshops which are based heavily on conversation and sharing of resources and experiences. The facilitator prepares engaging activities to facilitate conversations for coaches to meet or partially meet two or more of the objectives. Facilitators provide a few ideas and resources, but just like a coaching conversation, facilitators aim to draw out knowledge from the participants through well-crafted questions. The purpose of this format is for participants to see and hear conversation questioning modeled. Literacy coaches have an opportunity to pre-select which objective they would like to focus, thus allowing for choice.

**Summary** In summary, coaches receive training in RCSI PD program by previewing the workshop, take notes by using the reflection questions provided, and participating in a discussion to unpack the learning of the workshop. Literacy coaches also receive training on RCSI Coaching Method. This is accomplished through a book study, a webinar, and collaboration in the Trimester RCSI Literacy Coach Collaboration Meeting.

**Coaching Conversation.** The most important task for coaches is to lead individual or discipline-specific group conversation. The purpose of the individual conversations is to move teachers toward meeting the objectives of effectively using complex text and direct and explicit RCSI in the content are classroom. The purpose of the discipline-specific conversations is to facilitate conversations within the department to collaborate and develop the RCSI scope and sequence and the complex text that will be used.
**Individual Conversations.** The purpose of the individual conversations is to move teachers toward meeting the objectives of effectively using complex text and direct and explicit RCSI in the content are classroom. Coaches are asked to meet with each of their coachees for thirty minutes once a trimester and lead conversation with the discipline groups once a month for 30 minutes. Coaches are to track their conversation in a document which are keep confidential. The data collected in the document helps the coach reflect and determine program efficacy.

A coach’s pool of coachees are teachers who teach similar disciplines. For example, if a coach taught science, their coachees would be the other science teachers. Literacy coach, S. Jules (personal communication, July 15, 2020), described that collaboration and problem-solving with teachers was the most fun part of her position. She explained how her process of focusing on carefully crafted open-ended questions led to teachers coming to their own conclusions. Coaching sessions are not required but encouraged. However, coaches are asked to actively try to schedule teachers. It is the hope of the program coordinators that teachers will begin to see the effectiveness of the literacy coaching program and hear testimonials of how the program improves reading comprehension for their students. These testimonials should encourage others to participate.

Coaches influence teachers by leading conversations with carefully crafted reflective questions. The coaches also artfully and gently steer teachers toward improvement in the learning objectives of the RCSI program. In her book, Toll (2014) explained that the conversation begins with a central open question which she calls *The Question*. The Question frames the work that the teachers will do in terms of serving their
students and the initiative. An example would be, “When you think about implementing …[the strategy]…in your classroom and consider the student learning that might occur, what gets in the way?” (Toll, p. 122). She calls this the Problem-Solving Cycle. By creating a problem, teachers become more engaged. The conversation puts the coach and the teacher in partnership to explore problems, activity adaptation, ideas, resources, and solutions.

This method is described in her book (Toll, 2014) and is scheduled to be discussed in the third week of the book study. The coach is to ask open-ended question to help the teacher explore all aspects of the problem. It is tempting to move to brainstorming a solution too quickly, warned Toll, so it is imperative that the problem has been thoroughly discussed and any data reviewed. Once the coach-teacher partners feel their understanding of the issue is complete, the coach asks, “If this problem were solved, what would it be like?” (Toll, 2014, p. 69). Once the goal has been fully visualized, steps and activities are brainstormed to bring the goal to fruition.

Effective questions have five characteristics (Toll, 2006) and are as follows:

- Questions are open-ended
- Questions are nonjudgmental
- Questions are carefully and artfully crafted. Simple, bland words are chosen to avoid invoking emotion
- Questions are presented in calm, neutral, comfortable manner
- Negative responses use more “I” statements than “you” and are used sparingly (Toll, 2006).
Because the conversation depends on the coach’s ability to craft good open-ended questions, the coaches receive training on this skill through the webinar and is described in the training section.

Conversations between the teacher and the coaches are confidential. However, the coach takes conversations using a Coaching Conversations Record Template (see Appendix R) so that the teacher and coach have records on what they discussed and decided. Since this is a goal and objectives based program, in addition to teacher learning, coaches must always gently encourage the use of the Template for RCSI Lesson Plan (see Appendix L) and the RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier (see Appendix M).

After the teacher-coach conversation and once the teachers have had an opportunity to try the strategy in the classroom, a follow up conversation is schedule and the coach leads the teacher through reflection using open-ended questions. Math coach, C. Nolte (personal communication, June 25, 2020) explained that teachers responded best when they were provided choice of question to which they could respond as their reflection. Coaches may wish to try this method while conducting their follow up meetings. The coach learns about the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of different activities through the report of the teacher.

There are four key steps to a successful coaching conversation:

- preparing for conversations and reviewing of previous meeting’s notes,
- taking comprehensive notes using the Coaching Conversations Record Template (see Appendix R) which includes the problem explored and
discussed in detail, the goal, brainstormed solutions, activities, resources and ideas, and action steps,

- listening and learning in partnership with the coachee, preparing open-ended questions to help expand on thoughts and draw out more details, keeping the conversation on task, and

- being reliable (Toll, 2014).

The conversations rely heavily on the coach’s ability to craft good open-ended questions. There are five categories of questions stem provided by Toll plus an additional category added by the RCSI program coordinators which are used in the coaching conversation and are as follows:

1. Conversation openers,
2. digging deep into a problem or situation,
3. solution exploring questions,
4. creating a plan,
5. what else (Toll, 2006), and
6. reflection after strategy implementation

In addition to the five types of question provided by Toll, an additionally type of question has been added to the document called which are the reflection question stems for after the demonstration. Coaches are asked to collaborate with other coaches to create a resource for question stems enter them in the RCSI Coaches Question Stem Resource (see Appendix S).

In summary, coaches are asked to meet with coachees on a trimester basis for 30 minutes and use open-ended questions to facilitate conversations. Through these
conversations, coaches influence teachers’ use of complex text and RCSI in their classroom. Coaches take notes on these conversations which are kept for record but are confidential to teacher and coach. The purpose of these conversations is support teachers in growing their students’ reading comprehension proficiency.

**Discipline-Specific Conversations.** The purpose of the discipline-specific conversations is to facilitate conversations within the department to collaborate and develop the RCSI scope and sequence and the complex text that will be used. The discipline-specific group conversations are also a perfect time for teachers to share struggles, activities, and new ideas.

Coaches are expected to lead a thirty-minute discussion with discipline specific groups monthly. In this way, coaches can provide instruction to and collaborate with teachers who have not yet chosen to work with an RCSI coach and get them more interested in using RCSI and RCSI coaching. These monthly meetings would also be an opportunity for teachers to provide evidence to peers about the strategy instruction efficacy, share ideas, and collaborate. These conversations are confidential. The coach should take notes on the conversation for future reference for the group and the coach. The coach documents the date of the meeting and a summary of what was discussed or decided. This information is share in a report to the partners and is described in detail in a topic named School Services. In addition to the teachers and indirectly the students, coaches are accountable to the administration of Teaching & Learning, the high school principal, program coordinators, and key ELA staff members.

Coaches should refer to Toll (2014) and their book study work on Chapter 7: *What is Unique About Working with Teams* while preparing for their first departmental
meeting. The coach should facilitate conversations that move the following objectives forward:

- to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
- to build a departmental and school wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker, and
- to select complex text which is used for individual classes and enter it into the curriculum tracker for individual lessons.

During monthly RCSI updates, departments continue the development of direct and explicit instruction expertise. Coaches craft questions which encourage teachers to share their ideas, activities, success, and struggles. Coaches encourage teachers to share RCSI lesson plan samples and practice adapting activities which scaffold students to greater independent strategy use. Coaches aid in the development of the scope and sequence of strategy instruction and complex text selection and therefore need a strong understanding of the curriculum tracker, AtlasNext, (Faria Education Group, 2020).

In summary, the purpose of the discipline-specific conversation is to provide an opportunity for teachers to work on the scope and sequence and complex text selection for RCSI in their classes. The conversations also provide an opportunity for teachers to confer, brainstorm, and share ideas about effective activities for strategy instruction. Coaches take confidential notes during these monthly thirty-minute meetings. A meeting summary, date, and length of meeting is recorded as data to be reported to the partners.

**Summary.** Conducting conversation is the most important task of the coach. While preparing for and conducting conversations, coaches use the guiding principles for RCSI
literacy coaches (Knight, 2018; Toll, 2006) and five characteristics of effective questions (Toll, 2006). The purpose of the conversations is to meet the goal objectives of the program. Through crafting good open-ended questions, coaches unlock teachers’ and the group’s wisdom to come to conclusions about problems, goals, activities, ideas, and action steps. The coach writes confidential notes during conversation for the teacher-coach or group-coach reference.

**Demonstrations.** The third task for coaches is to demonstrate lessons. The source of the demonstration derives from the conversations, not the other way around. During conversations, the teacher and coach realize from time to time that it would be helpful if a teacher could see a strategy demonstrated in the classroom. A pre-conference, demonstration, and follow-up conference are then scheduled. These dates and times are also recorded as data for the coach to include in the reporting to the partners. As with other conversations, coaches use the guiding principles for RCSI literacy coaches (Knight, 2018; Toll, 2006) and prepare for conversations using the five characteristics of effective questions (Toll, 2006). The Demonstrate Lessons subtopic is based on of Toll’s (2006) book *The Literacy Coach’s Desk Reference: Processes and Perspectives for Effective Coaching* (p. 155-158).

**Pre-Conference Conversations.** The demonstration of lessons includes a pre-demonstration conversation about the strategy, complex text being used, and a sample of the direct and explicit RCSI lesson plan which the coach has prepared for the demonstration. This lesson plan is a completed copy of the Template for RCSI Lesson Plan (see Appendix L) and also the RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier (see Appendix M). It is helpful to the teacher if the pre-conversation included an example a
guided or independent activity that needed to be adapted because it did not scaffold the student toward independent use of a strategy. Also, it is helpful to ask the teacher if they could think of or adapt a guided or independent activity or provide a suggestion of a complex text to use. In this way, teacher and coach are actively collaborating. This helps engage the teacher, provide guided practice for the teacher in adapting activities, and provide an opportunity for the coach to show the teacher respect by asking for assistance.

**Demonstrations.** The purpose of the demonstration is to model the direct and explicit strategy instruction in order to assist the teacher in her goal of reading proficiency for the secondary students. The demonstration occurs in the teacher’s classroom at their convenience. To ensure that the planned demonstration’s purpose is clear, will help the teacher meet personal goals, match the interests of the teacher, and include specific requests of the teacher, the **Demonstration Lesson Planner** (see Appendix T) is recommended for use (Toll, 2006). RCSI is modeled in the classroom with the students and teachers take notes while they observe or co-teach. This is the only way in which the RCSI literacy coach works directly with students. Modeling by the coach and reflecting by the teacher on the RCSI help embed the learning of the instruction for the teachers. District K-2 literacy coach S. Julson (personal communication, July 15, 2020) and K-5 Math coach (C. Nolte, personal communication, June 24, 2020) have both effectively used demonstration lessons in the classrooms as a coaching task. This precedent should make the transition for demonstrations in the classroom easier for the literacy coaches. During the demonstration, teachers should take notes of what she noticed about the strategy implementation and the reaction of the students. The coach asks the teacher to take note of the implementation of direct and explicit instruction, the
success (or lack thereof), and any adaptations the teacher would make to improve the lesson (Toll, 2006). These notes are to be used to guide the post-conference.

**Post-Conference Conversation.** To fully reap the benefit of a demonstration, the post-conference conversation must occur (Toll, 2006). Its purpose is to embed the learning which occurred during the demonstration, unpack and reflect on ways to improve on the instruction, activities, or complex text used, and apply what was learned toward new goals. It may be difficult for coaches to be open to feedback that they may receive especially if there were struggles in parts of the lesson (Toll, 2006). Coaches should use these struggle as perfect opportunities for conferring about problem-solving and deepening the understanding of direct and explicit strategy instruction, thus meeting the objectives of the program. Like coaching conversations, the coach first job is to listen to the teacher. Then, the post-demonstration relies heavily on artfully crafted open-ended questions to extend the conversation like Toll (2006) provided:

- What surprised you about the demonstration lesson?
- Was there anything about which you wanted to ask me?
- May I share some of my decision making during the lesson?
- What did you notice about the students during the lesson?
- Are there modifications to the lesson that might be useful?
- Does this lesson help you working toward your goal? (p. 164)
  - In what ways?

The coach should take notes of the post-demonstration on the Demonstration Lesson Planner (see Appendix T). These questions help teacher and coach come to a better
understanding of direct and explicit RCSI and help reveal teacher’s thinking, reflection, and ideas about the demonstration.

**Summary.** In summary, demonstrations encompass pre-conference conversations, the demonstration itself, and the post-conference conversations. The lesson is based on the goal of the teacher springing from a coaching conversation. The desire for the demonstration is mutually realized during the coaching conversation. The purpose of the pre-conference conversation is to set the stage for the demonstration, so the teacher has a clear picture of the strategy, the direct and explicit lesson plan, the complex text and activities to be used, and how it meets the teachers learning objectives. During the demonstration, the teacher is asked to make notations for the post-conference conversation. During the post-conference conversation, the coach first listens to the teacher’s feedback and reflections on the demonstrations. Then, the coach extends the conversation, deepen learning, and reveal thinking by posing artfully crafted open-ended question. Notes on these conversations are taken and confidentially recorded. The date and time are recorded in a document to be shared with the partners.

**School Services.** The fourth task involves coaches providing additional services to the schools include presenting at workshops and meetings, and compiling, analyzing, and reflecting on data.

**Presentations and Meetings.** The coach’s role is to implement the plan in order to meet the goal and the objectives of the program. In addition to the teachers and indirectly the students, coaches are accountable to the administration of Teaching & Learning, the high school principal, program coordinators, and key ELA staff members. It is the coach’s role to keep other partners informed of the progress toward the goal and
objectives of the program by sharing general data trends and the coach’s own reflection on interpretation of the data. This may come in the form of attending meetings, giving presentations, leading workshops, or reporting individually to partners. Coaches may also be asked to present at workshops to help facilitate teacher’s growth toward using direct and explicit strategy instruction in the classroom, planning the scope and sequence, and selection and use of complex text. The purpose of this communication is for the partners to understand the interpretation of the data which is collected on their students’ use of reading comprehension strategies, as taught by the content area teachers using direct and explicit RCSI. The partners, in collaboration with coaches and teachers, aid in determining the program efficacy and any course correction that may need to be made.

**Data Reporting.** Coaches are responsible to collect four points of data which is shared with the partners. These four items include:

- a pre-assessment and post-assessment of the student reading comprehension achievement before and after strategy instruction,
- number of coaching sessions and demonstrations completed by the coach,
- and pre- and post-workshop surveys of teachers
- reflection and report of coach of program efficacy

The pre-assessment of the student reading comprehension achievement is facilitated through the discipline-specific group during the first coaching conversation conducted by the coach. The group comes to an agreement on the strategy and text they would like to pre- and post-assess with their students. The group also comes to an agreement on the format of assessment that would be used. The coordinators suggest
using an assessment similar to Assessment Template Examples (adapted from J. Josephs, personal communication, January 22, 2020, see Appendix G) which is used for the pre- and post-assessment. Teachers use the four-point grading system on a scale of zero to four (Marzano, 2017). The numbers have the following meaning:

- Zero indicates the student did not complete the task.
- One indicates the student has beginning knowledge of the strategy.
- Two indicates the students has developing understanding of the strategy.
- Three indicates the student understands and can use the strategy with mastery.
- Four indicates that the student exceeds the expectations of the strategy use.

This scale was selected because the school is familiar with this format. Teachers use this scale to assess of students’ progress as it pertains to how well the student is meeting the expectations of the learning goal (Marzano, 2017).

The format for data collection was used in the high school as part of the ELA in the Content Area Classroom initiative for 2019-2020. By using adaptations of forms from previous experiences, the program is building on what teachers already know. This may address some of the barriers to teacher’s reluctance to participating in the program. Once teachers have rated the pre- or post-assessments, they enter the total of students receiving that rate (zero to four) in a Google Form (2008), called Pre- and Post-Assessment Data (adapted from J. Joseph, personal communication, October 16, 2019; see Appendix U). Coaches compile this data to get a clear picture of program efficacy and student progress.
toward improving reading comprehension through RCSI. Coaches interpret, reflect, and determine what the data is telling them. After conferring with other coaches to discuss and interpret the data, coaches write a report which compiles the information, interpretation, and reflection of the coaches. These reports are made available to the teachers and the partners.

**Not a RCSI Coach Responsibility.** Observing is not planned as a task which would be performed by coaching in the RCSI program. This is mentioned specifically because the district typically has coaches observe their coachees. For the RCSI program, this practice is not implemented because the partnership approach relies heavily on teacher-coach relationship, open-communication, mutual trust, and respect. Researchers Shower and Joyce (1995) and educator, writer Toll (2005, 2014) found that not only were observations detrimental to the teacher-coach relationship, but also it did not prove to influence experienced teachers’ growth or effective in creating change (Shower & Joyce, 1995). Observing was found not to be as effective and even harmful to the coaching process, so was therefore eliminated the RCSI literacy coach’s responsibility (Toll, 2014).

Other non-responsibilities include working with students in small-groups and other reading specialist duties such as teaching phonics to struggling readers. It is the coach’s role to keep the partners informed of the progress toward the goal and objectives, however, the program does not support sharing individual conversation notes from teachers or discipline groups. To preserve the coach-teacher relationship and avoid eroding the partnership, Toll (2014) stressed that these conversations remain confidential.
**Characteristics of Coaches.** The coaching segment was designed to be comprehensive and to work closely with the coordinator of the program and the partners of the program. Coaches would be selected by submitting a resume and answers to the open-ended questions in a Google Form (2008) called, RCSI Literacy Coach Selection Questions (see Appendix D). Their selection process would occur during the Pre-Work Segment. The facilitators select candidates whose resume and open answers to the questions on the form reflect character aligning to the following:

- The coach should teach in a similar discipline to their coachee. Cantrell et al. (2008) explained that testimony of the strategies must be provided from teachers in similar disciplines for content area teachers to believe the effectiveness of the strategy for their discipline.
- Coaches must have a passion for secondary student literacy and have a conviction of the accuracy of the themes revealed by the literature review. “The coach agrees with the goals of the coaching program” (Marzano, 2013, p. 212).
- Coaches must have mastery over pedagogy, instruction in own discipline, and proven ability to improve student performance, (Marzano, 2013 Wren & Reed, 2005). “Literacy coaches need to be well versed in the research, theory, and practice of literacy instruction” (Toll, 2015 p.10).
- Coaches are open to the RCSI coaching system including providing instruction in the areas of theory, modeling instruction, providing feedback, facilitating dialogue, reflection, and collaboration (Knight, 2018, Toll, 2015; Wren & 2005).
• Coaches must have interpersonal skills to be able to conduct respectful, nonjudgmental, confidential sessions (Knight, 2018; Marzano, 2013; Toll, 2015; Wren & Reed, 2005).

• Coaches must have good communication skills including crafting good open-ended questions which require deep thinking and reflecting (Knight, 2018; Toll, 2015; Wren & Reed, 2005).

In summary, coaches are to be selected on their character as it aligns to the character list provided in this subtopic. To apply, applications are to fill out the RCSI Literacy Coach Selection Questions (see Appendix D) and provide a current resume. Final selection of the coaches is conducted by the coordinator and the partners of the program.

**Summary.** The coaching segment topic was divided and described by the following subtopics: Coaching Role, Training, Coaching Conversations, Demonstrations, School Services, and Characteristics of a Coach.

Coaches continue the progress of the workshop segment by facilitating conversation with and providing demonstrations to teachers and departments on an ongoing and long-term basis. Coaches the partnership coaching method which relies on locking the teachers’ wisdom with the use of open-ended questions. The use of coaches responds to the capstone question *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* by providing teachers with support needed to systematically prepare for RCSI and complex text in their curriculum and provide teachers with ongoing, long-term support in the art of direct and
explicit RCSI instruction. Coaches are required to go through a training process of a workshop, book study, webinar, and a trimester collaboration with teachers. Coaches are selected on character based on the submission of a resume and responses from a survey. Coaches prepare presentations of the program’s efficacy for the RCSI PD program partners based on conversations from teachers, data from surveys, and student assessment of proficiency.

**Segment Four: Post-Work**

The segment included a post-survey to the content area teacher and administrators. It also includes a post-assessment for the students to test the program’s effectiveness of raising students reading proficiency. Coaches collect, synthesize, and reflect on the data. The purpose of the post-work is to decide on the program’s effectiveness and to make any course corrections deemed necessary to improve the program. The post-work is conducted by the coaches and a report is presented to the partners and can be summed up as the following:

- Post-survey to teachers
- Post-assessment for students
- Coaches collect, synthesize, reflect on data
- Present to partners

The details of the post-work can be found in a section called School Services.

**Summary**

In summary, the professional development program was divided into four segments including Pre-Work, Workshop, Coaching and Collaboration, and Post-Work. This format directly answered the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional*
Development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?

Participation in all the segments of the program contribute to meeting the goal and objectives of the program. I believe that by providing the systematic professional development program in the format described above, teachers would accept the beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers’ literacy responsibility. Teachers also gain expertise in the craft direct and explicit RCSI. This format would facilitate the creation of departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction, and teachers would increase their select complex text use as a more frequent source of instruction. Through this process coaches would be trained to provide teachers ongoing, long-term support as grow in their strategy and complex text use in the classroom.

“Content area teachers can make a significant impact on students’ literacy abilities if they have the training needed to incorporate literacy instruction into the content area classroom” (Dubbeldie, 2017 p. 39).

Teachers would be provided with direct and explicit strategy instruction modeling, guided practice, using and teaching the strategies using direct, explicit, and systematic instruction. During each phase of professional development, teachers and administrators collaborate, share, reflect on what they already know and have learned about the strategy instruction implementation. As described, the program was sophisticated in design and would take several years to reach maximum effectiveness in reaching its central goal of raising reading proficiency for secondary students. The timeline for the program implementation is described in the next topic.

Timeline
The capstone question was developed in February 2020, the literature review was conducted February and March of 2020, and the systematic professional development program was developed during the months of June and July of 2020. Due to the COVID19 virus outbreak, it is envisioned that the implementation of this program would be scheduled for fall of 2021. The tentative schedule is listed below:

- November 2020: Presentation to the teaching and learning administration
- August 2021, 2022, 2023: Pre-survey for the teachers, pre-assessment for students, selection, and training of coaches (including a 6-weeks book study).
- October 2021: Workshop where teachers and administration learn and partially meet the objectives of the program.
- November 2021 – March 2024: Ongoing, long-term training using coaches and PLC collaboration.
- March 2022, 2023, 2024: Post-survey for teachers, assessment of students and evaluation of the program effectiveness by facilitators and administrators, coaches.

The timeline responds to the capstone question *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* by providing the partners of the program a guide for a successful plan to improve reading comprehension for secondary students. The proposal for the program was tentatively set for November 2020. Because the world was suffering from the COVID19 pandemic at the time of this writing, the accuracy of dates of the program proposal and implementation were in question. The timeline served as a template to the amount of time
and duration of each piece and the dates may be adjusted to meet the environment and situation at the time of a scheduled launch.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I presented my motivation for selecting the project of professional development on reading comprehension strategy instruction. I described why I chose the method of the project and how I intend to present and explain the contents of the research to the administrators and content area teachers. I provided a detailed description of the school setting and school philosophy in which the material would be ideally presented. I also described the audience. A detailed description of the project was included with a timeline.

The PD workshop with a coaching program was created based on the four themes discovered from researching the question of *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* The goal of the RCSI professional development is to raise reading comprehension proficiency for secondary students with the following objectives:

- to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
- to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
- to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
- to select complex text which is used for individual classes and enter it into the curriculum tracker for individual lessons, and
- to provide teachers with ongoing, long-term RCSI development using similar discipline specific coaches.

The PD format, methods, activities, forms, goal, and objectives are based on literature reviewed on each item listed. These citations were included in Chapter Three to justify decisions made for the final PD product. The PD was designed with four segments which included pre-work, a workshop, an ongoing and long-term coaching and collaboration segment, and post-work. During this process of the systematic RCSI PD program implementation, the partners and teachers commit and believe that RCSI and complex text use raises reading comprehension for secondary students. Also, teachers and partners learn about direct, explicit RCSI and reading strategies in an engaging manner. The Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Onion (see Appendix A) illustrates how the parts are interrelated. In addition, teachers and partners have an opportunity to learn and collaborate about activities which scaffold students to independent use of reading comprehension strategies. The program uses coaches to continue working on individual teachers’ growth and guiding discipline-specific groups toward scope and sequencing of RCSI and complex text use. Coaches use the partnership approach which is based on the relationship of the coach and teacher and the coach’s use of open-ended questioning to unlock the teachers’ own wisdom.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

As I reflected on the process of exploring, reading, reflecting, and writing this capstone, I wondered if I achieved my goal of creating a professional development which answered the question: How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? Chapter Four reviews my personal connection to this topic, major themes in the literature review, illustrated by RCSI Professional Development Pillars (see Appendix V), the overview and description of the profession development program, and the context for its implementation.

This project profoundly effects my personal and my professional life and I believe this work will influence other stakeholders including other teachers, administrators, the student, and their families. This work could also have considerable positive implications for our district and the community. This chapter summarizes the major learnings in chapters one through three, describes the impact it could have in the future, and what that means for myself, my students, and the district.

Chapter One Personal Reflection

In Chapter One, I described a few experiences which led to the crafting of my capstone question. The first was my personal experience struggling with low literacy proficiency in school and the low self-esteem which ensued because of it. The second were the accounts of observing students in the school system struggle with reading comprehension in the secondary school and how that struggle was not met with reading comprehension strategy instruction by the teacher. The third was my own feeling of
incompetency as a teacher when I noticed that my students needed RCSI, but I did not know how. Finally, the influence of the PD continuing education courses which were offered through the district on literacy. These experiences laid the foundation of my journey of this capstone project and painted a clear picture to me that secondary students needed help from me to learn how to comprehend text independently. The process of writing Chapter One led me to the draft of my capstone question which was: *What literacy instructional practices have been found to influence reading comprehension for secondary students?* The realization that I had struggled with low proficiency through secondary school and I to help students with similar issues created a hunger that kept me going through the six months of creating this project.

The district where I am employed has a powerful literacy plan in place, especially up through grade five. In addition, the district used models and initiatives provided by Marzano Resources which provided further evidence of their commitment to literacy and complex text such as building academic vocabulary and complex text use (Marzano Resources, 2020). At the time of this writing, the district had a plan called the Public School 2019-2020 Continuous Improvement Plan in place that focused on high student achievement, optimal teaching and learning environment, and a robust response programming to meet the needs of all students in a tiered system (Town-Gunderson, 2019). Even with this powerful format in place, a brief foray into the literacy proficiency numbers revealed low proficiency performance for secondary students in the district and my curiosity converted to real concern.

It was not until after the reading and synthesizing of Chapter Two’s Literature Review that the capstone question took on its final form: *How can a systematic*
professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? This literature review helped me gain valuable insight to the understanding and instructional practices which influence reading proficiency for secondary students.

Chapter Two Personal Reflection

Studying the literature pertaining to instructional practices that influence reading proficiency in secondary schools has been eye-opening. The literature review began as a quest to solve the mystery of what instructional practices influenced secondary students’ reading comprehension and a real passion to answer this question welded inside of me as I began to parse a collection of literature on the topic. My initial foray into the subject to reading comprehension and secondary students confirmed my suspicions that low reading proficiency profoundly limits an individual’s schooling success and has lifetime and generation implications (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NIL, 2007; Wolfe & Haveman, 2001; Yagelski, 2000). This confirmation propelled my reading of literature toward investigating what underling factors contributed to the underdevelopment of so many secondary students’ reading proficiency and, conversely, what practices improve proficiency. Using the capstone question How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? as my guide, I uncovered four major themes which became the pillars of the RCSI professional development program. This is best illustrated by RCSI Professional Development Pillars (see Appendix V).
The first theme divulged was that reading comprehension strategy instruction (RCSI) needed to be taught in our secondary schools. Nationally, schools invest heavily in developing student literacy, however by secondary school, RCSI diminished even though student needs higher levels of reading proficiency to understand high levels of text. (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Cantrell & Carter, 2009; Boardman et al., 2008; Ness, 2008; Wren & Reed, 2005). Content area teachers have a responsibility to help students improve their reading proficiency by the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS, 2020; J. Josephs, personal communication, May 18, 2020). Researchers found that providing RCSI was most effective when delivered by content area teachers in their subject areas (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Boardman, et al., 2008; Ceedar Center, 2013; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Gabriel et al., 2016; Kamil et al., 2008; Moje, 2007; Ness, 2008; NIL, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). With strategy instruction, students improve reading proficiency, access content knowledge easier, save time (because students can read and comprehend the text faster), and have a better chance of succeeding overall.

The second theme revealed by the literature review was that students needed to have declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge of strategy instruction and this was best accomplished by using direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence. Declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge provide the metacognition enabling a student to independently use a strategy to aid in comprehension (Afflerbach, 2002; Baker, 2002; Dole & Pearson, 1987; Duffy, 2002; McEwan, 2007; Nokes & Dole, 2004; Roehler & Duffy, 1984). Researchers found that the most effective way to build
these levels of knowledge was through direct and explicit strategy instruction which included a discussion about, modeling of, guided and independent practice with the strategy (AFT, 2014; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Boardman, et al., 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Kamil et al., 2008; Green, n.d.; NIL, 2007; Ness, 2008; Nokes & Dole, 2004 Roehler & Duffy, 1984; McEwan, 2007; Warner, n.d). The RCSI was most effective when delivered in the framework of school-wide scope and sequence (Kamil et al., 2008; S. Manikowski, personal communication, April 2020; Moats 2002). The Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Onion (see Appendix A) helps illustrate how these parts are interrelated.

The third theme which the literature review revealed to influence reading proficiency for students was that complex text in secondary schools must frequently use complex text as the source of instruction in the content area classroom. Students need copious opportunity to engage with and read challenging text in order to improve reading comprehension (Adams, 2010; AFT, 2014; Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Armbruster, 2001; CCSS, 2020; J. Burling, personal communication, May 2019; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Glass, 2015; Gomez & Gomez, 2007; NIL 2007; A. Preppernau, personal communication, June 11, 2020; Schmoker, 2018; Shanahan, 2020). Because of reasons such as lack of time in the curriculum and varied reading proficiency levels in the classroom, text deletion from the curriculum has been found to be a common practice and this deletion has a negative effect on developing student reading proficiency (Adams, 2010; AFT 2014; Armbruster, 2001, Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Boardman et al., 2008; J. Burling, personal communication, May 2019; Kamil et al., 2008; Moje et al., 2001; Ness, 2008; Schmoker, 2018; Shanahan, 2020; Williams, 2010). Students need ample complex
text exposure and engagement while learning in the classroom in order to develop reading proficiency.

The fourth literacy practice which influenced reading proficiency for secondary students, was that professional development in RCSI which is ongoing, and long-term with the use of coaches must be provide to teachers. Participants and administrators needed to see the value and usefulness of the professional development in order for the program to succeed (Knight, 2018; Schmoker, 2018, Toll, 2015; Williams, 2010). Participants needed conviction by the evidence provided that reading proficiency was important for an individual’s lifetime success and needed to be made a priority. The PD must also have clear learning on the craft of RCSI including opportunities to collaborate and share ideas (Moats, 2002; Ness, 2008; NIL, 2007; NRP, 2000, as cited by AFT, 2014; Toll, 2015).

Teachers have many roadblocks to teaching reading strategies and the PD must address these if the program is to be a success. These roadblocks could include lack of time in the teacher’s curriculum, lack of awareness that teaching reading strategies is necessary, and the feeling of not being qualified to teach RCSI (Boardman, et al., 2008; Cantrell et al., 2008; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; Ness, 2008; NIL, 2007; Shanahan, 2013; Wren & Reed, 2005). Finally, the PD needed to be ongoing and long-term with the use of coaches in order to be effective (Brown et al., 1996; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008 as cited in Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010; Knight, 2018; Heineke, 2013; K. Killorn, personal communication, June 9, 2020; S. Manikowski, personal communication, March 2020; Marzano, 2013; Moats, 2002; NIL, 2007; Saaris, 2017; Toll 2015). Administrators and teachers need RCSI PD (comparable to what was described in this capstone) which is
coherent, ongoing, and long-term with the guidance of coaches in order to successfully use RCSI in the content area classroom and raise reading proficiency for students.

In summary, by conducting this literature review and writing Chapter Two, I am convicted that it is the school’s primary obligation to create literate students by providing the instructional practices revealed by this study. I discovered four major themes from the literature review which became the pillar of the RCSI professional development program. Those themes were as follows:

- students need RCSI in the content area secondary classroom to learn how to comprehend complex text,
- teachers need to use direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence in order for the strategy instruction to be effective,
- students need to frequently use complex text as their main source of learning in the disciplinary classroom, and
- teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully instruct reading comprehension strategies

My hope was that teachers and administrators would be persuaded by themes found in literature review. My intent was to shed light on the importance of literacy proficiency for a student over the course of their schooling career and the lifetime implications. I attested through the review of the effectiveness of delivering RCSI to secondary students in the direct and explicit format with a scope and sequence. I declared that secondary content area teachers of the responsibility on their part to provide RCSI in their discipline
and how that can help students succeed in their classrooms. I verified that frequently using complex text in the classroom is imperative for reading proficiency.

As influential instructional practices manifested during this process, I espoused the themes uncovered and the capstone question: How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? As a result, Chapter Three and the RCSI PD program was designed with the goal of raising reading proficiency for secondary students in my district.

Chapter Three Personal Reflection

The program was designed in response to the capstone question How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? The four themes revealed by the literature review became the pillar of the professional development program, and the audience in which the program was envisioned to take place. From these components, I selected five objectives for the PD program, and they included:

- to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
- to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
- to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
- to select complex text which is used for individual lessons, and
• to train coaches to help teachers develop and retain RCSI fidelity.

To achieve the goal and objectives of the program, I concluded it needed four segments including pre-work, an initial workshop, coaching and collaboration, and post-work and were previously described (p. 67) as follows:

1. Pre-work: presentation to teaching and learning administrators, selection and pre-training for RCSI coaches, pre-survey (teachers) pre-assessment (students). The purpose of the pre-work is to get a better understanding of student, teacher, and administrators background knowledge and experience pertaining to the topic of RCSI.

2. Workshop: A workshop is provided for secondary teachers and a few administrators and led by facilitators. The purpose of the workshop is to partially meet the first four program objectives.

3. Coaching and collaboration: on-going and long-term coaching, reflection, and collaboration with professional learning groups. The purpose of this segment is to continue the objectives of the workshop, complete the final objective, and to develop and retain RCSI fidelity.

4. Post-work and reflection: The segment included a post-survey to the content area teacher and administrators. It also includes a post-assessment for the students to test the program’s effectiveness of raising students reading proficiency. The purpose of the post-work is to collect data on the program’s effectiveness and to make any course corrections deemed necessary to improve the program. The post-work is conducted by the coaches and the details can be found in a section called School Services.
In Chapter Three, I provided rational for the format of the workshop delivery including engaging activities which inspire, motivate, and invite participants to actively learn (Kalinowski et al., 2019; Kamil et al., 2008; Knowles, 1992; Saaris, 2017). The design of RCSI PD provided a variety of learning activities which facilitated opportunities for participants to discuss and share ideas, collaborate on resources and knowledge, and create authentic materials to be used in their curriculum.

Chapter Three also provides rationale for the use of partnership coaching the coaching segment of the RCSI PD program. This type of coaching is focused on building the relationship between the coach and the teacher using respectful, open-ended questions (Knight, 2018; Toll, 2014; Cory & Bradley, 1998). Also, our district already uses a form of partnership coaching with the methods and initiatives provided by Marzano Resources, (2020). In addition, after conferring with other coaches in the district who based their coaching on relationships and open-ended questions to unlock teachers’ wisdom, S. Jules (personal communication, July 15, 2020) and C. Nolte (personal communication, June 2020), I determined this was the best approach for this district.

Throughout the process of building the capstone project, I learned about building an effective professional development program. Reading about the professional development, talking with administrators and teachers, and puzzling through this process of designing this project, has left me with a new appreciation of the technicalities of building a professional development program. It is far more complicated than I could have imagined. Considering all the details, I reflected deeply on the audience and setting where this development would take place. It made me stand in their shoes and really imagine what this program would require them to do, how they would receive it, and
what is obtainable in their day. Without the support of the administration and their conviction of the evidence provided in the literature review as it pertains to reading proficiency, the professional development would not be effective. Fortunately, the district where this professional development would take place is already in the mindset that literacy and complex text needs to be a priority across the disciplines. In addition to this, English staff in this district have already begun work on supporting content area class teachers as they provide reading practice in their classrooms.

It is my hope that the evidence and descriptions in this capstone have persuaded teachers and administrators that the professional development program is sound and grounded in research and previous literature. I hope that they feel confident that through the plans, the goal and objectives of the program would be met and teachers’ roadblocks to its implementation would be met. I am aware of the resistance that teachers may have to yet another school initiative. However, it is my hope that they recognize that this plan simply builds on many of the tools, resources, and activities they are already using. The format provided in the RCSI PD program was designed to add structure and instruction in the areas that need to be strengthened in order to meet the goal and objectives of the program.

In summary, the RCSI PD program as described in Chapter Three could have a profound effect on student reading proficiency. The steps involved in implementing such a comprehensive program, I discovered, was mind-boggling and overwhelming. The process of building this program has given me a new appreciation for our school’s leaders and the work they do to further and support teachers’ growth. I hope to continue to work toward its implementation and create real change for many students. As I wrote this
section of the Conclusion and as I reviewed my literature based product of the RCSI PD program, I felt confident in the program’s pillars (based on the literature review), goal (of raising reading comprehension for secondary students), objectives and segments. These guiding pieces led to answer the capstone question: *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?*

**Future Implications**

Through the process of this capstone, it became clear to me that helping secondary students improve their reading proficiency needs to be a prominent role in any school system. It is my sincere hope that the school considers implementing the RCSI professional development program in whole or in part, as I am confident that the themes on which it is based is grounded in evidence from the literature review and should influence reading comprehension for secondary students.

**District Implications**

The testimony provided in the literature review was created for districts and teachers to use to either challenge their current beliefs or confirm the alignment of their beliefs to the themes of the literature review. I am blessed to work in a district where reading proficiency priority is laced within its mission, vision, and goal. Phrases presented in the Public School 2019-2020 Continuous Improvement Plan (Town-Gunderson, 2019) like, “foster authentic literacy across content areas” (para. 3), “equip every student to be career and college ready” (para. 2), and “developing in EVERY learner the ability to succeed in an ever-changing world” (para. 1). These guiding statements and the personalities that make up the staff and administration confirm the
school’s commitment to their reading proficiency priority and their students’ success. I am equally thrilled to be able to share this knowledge with administrators and colleagues in this workshop and coaching program. The district has a solid literacy plan from grades pre-school to grades five. The evidence of a comprehensive, effective literacy plan, providing a literacy coach, and a reading intervention inventory.

As the ESL teacher in the district, I often observed reading lessons, classrooms with students silently reading to themselves, and overheard deep conversations in the Teaching & Learning office on the topic of literacy, complex text, and growing student reading proficiency. The climate in this district would be optimal at the time of this writing for the program implementation because many administrators and teachers already aligned with the guiding beliefs of the RCSI PD program. Also, many of the tools are already in place for the program such as: staff background knowledge about reading comprehension strategies, experience with complex text use, continuing education classes for teachers on reading comprehension and strategies, a strong K-5th Grade Local Literacy Plan, use of peer coaching, and administration commitment to students’ reading proficiency.

I envision being in collaboration with key staff in the ELA department in the secondary school as they strive to improve literacy instruction in the content area classroom. Their collaboration, guidance, insight, and previous experience with their ELA in the Content Area Initiative is imperative for this program to be successful. I believe in the evidence provided in the literature review and the themes it revealed which influence reading comprehension for secondary students. I look forward to being able to collaborate with other literacy minded teachers and administrators in the district with the
goals of learning from and sharing what I have learned. This collaboration and the foundation of this program could have a large impact on improving literacy proficiency for our students and I am excited for that opportunity.

**Professional Implications**

Professionally, I am excited and thrilled to have discovered and confirmed a means to help my secondary students reach higher levels of reading proficiency. I look forward to and feel more confident about implementing complex text into the curriculum and teaching students strategies to comprehend more. The process of reading past literature and building this professional development has given me a solid foundation to implement RCSI and the confidence that this work is grounded in research and should improve reading proficiency of my students in my own classroom.

Because of this process, I can have deep, academic conversation with scholars in my district and other places about literacy proficiency. I look forward to those conversations and the realizations that they will afford. This process has forced me to work on and fine tune skills on reading academic articles, skimming, processing data, summarizing, writing, conferring with colleagues, and accepting feedback. I have grown in my understanding of drawing conclusions based on deep reading and information from several sources. Because of this, I feel that I have become a more valuable team member for my district, my family, and the community at large. I have developed acute awareness of the work that our administrators do to support teachers and student learning. For this (and much more that they do that I do not realize), I thank them.

**Final Thoughts**
It must be noted that researcher, Dole (2006), warned that educators might be tricked into thinking that reading proficiency problems are solved if we just teach students comprehension strategies. RCSI is not the-end-to-be-all of literacy proficiency. There is a risk that this capstone project may add to this misconception. Literacy is a large, complicated skill to develop and includes far more ability in different components than what is mentioned in this capstone. Literacy also includes writing, listening, and speaking. It includes background knowledge, fluency, phonics, morphology, and vocabulary. It includes access to books and internet, family history of education and their reading culture. It includes a students’ emotional, social, and health wellbeing. It includes the students’ personal schooling history and that school’s commitment to copious amounts of authentic, complex text use as a means for instruction. It includes the need of a reading specialist in some cases (Kamil et al., 2008; NIL, 2007). A balance must be struck between the strategies being promoted through this project and other factors such as the ones listed above.

However, researchers Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), Dole et al. (1996), and Johnston (1985) confirmed the importance of teaching reading comprehension strategies so that students could independently use strategies on their own (as cited by Dole, 2006). RCSI can make a difference in an area that we as content area teachers have influence. That influence is our gift and responsibility to students in our care. I have built this project based on the question *How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?* My conclusion is that by implementing RCSI in the content area classroom, we help students learn how to navigate
complex text, we also provide better access to the content of a class, we enable the class to move faster, and we set the student up for a lifetime of success.
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APPENDIX B

Overview of the RCSI PD Program (Lesson Plan)

This Appendix provides an overview and the capstone project titled A Professional Development Program to Improve Reading Comprehension for Secondary Students. The capstone question which guided this project was as follows: How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction? The appendix includes the themes from the literature review, the goal, objectives, and guiding beliefs of the PD, segments of the PD, and the list of activities involved to meet the goal and objectives.

Themes

The themes revealed by the literature review were as follows:

- students need RCSI in the content area secondary classroom to learn how to comprehend complex text,
- teachers need to use direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence in order for the strategy instruction to be effective,
- students need to frequently use complex text as their main source of learning in the disciplinary classroom, and
- teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully instruct reading comprehension strategies
Goal, Objectives, and Guiding Beliefs

There is one overarching goal and five objectives of the Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Professional Development (RCSI PD) program.

**Goal**

The goal of the RCSI program is to improve independent reading comprehension for secondary students.

**Objectives**

The five objectives of the RCSI PD program are as follows:

- to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
- to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
- to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
- to select complex text which is used for individual lessons, and
- to develop a coaching program to help teachers develop and retain RCSI fidelity.

**Guiding Beliefs**

The purpose for building guiding beliefs about student proficiency and RCSI was determined necessary so that all participants would become fully committed to the program’s objectives. The guiding beliefs of the program founded on the literature review from Chapter Two are as follows:

- Reading proficiency profoundly affects an individual’s lifetime success
Content area teachers have a responsibility to help build students’ reading proficiency (CCSS, 2020).

RCSI help create independent adolescent readers and is most effective when provided in the content area classroom.

RCSI needs to be direct and explicit in order to be effective (AFT, 2014; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Boardman, et al., 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Kamil et al., 2008; Green, n.d.; NIL, 2007; Ness, 2008; Nokes & Dole, 2004; Roehler & Duffy, 1984; McEwan, 2007; Warner, n.d.).


Teachers needed to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully learn and implement RCSI in the classroom (Brown et al., 1996; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008 as cited in Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010; Knight, 2018; Heineke, 2013; K. Killorn, personal communication, June 9,
Segments

The segments of the RCSI PD program are as follows:

Pre-Work

The pre-work of the program includes presentation to teaching and learning administrators, selection and pre-training for RCSI coaches, pre-survey (teachers) pre-assessment (students). The purpose of the pre-work is to get a better understanding of student, teacher, and administrators background knowledge and experience pertaining to the topic of RCSI.

- Presentation to teaching and learning administrators
- Selection and pre-training for RCSI coaches
  - Each coach needs to be provided a copy of Toll’s (2014) book *The Literacy Coach’s Survival Guide: Essential Questions and Practical Answers.*
- Pre-survey (teachers)
- Pre-Assessment (students)

Workshop

A workshop is provided for secondary teachers and a few administrators and led by facilitators. The purpose of the workshop is to partially meet the first four program objectives.

- Workshop Google Slides
- Workshop activities and materials
Each participant needs to be provided one book of McEwan’s (2007) book 40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms. Grades 6-12.

Each participant will need an electronic device.

Scope and sequencing and complex text activities.

Coaching and Collaboration

The coaching and collaboration segment includes on-going and long-term coaching, reflection, and collaboration with professional learning groups. The purpose of this segment is to continue the objectives of the workshop, complete the final objective, and to develop and retain RCSI fidelity.

Coaching templates

Post-work

The segment includes a post-survey to the content area teacher and administrators. It also includes a post-assessment for the students to test the program’s effectiveness of raising students reading proficiency. The purpose of the post-work is to collect data on the program’s effectiveness and to make any course corrections deemed necessary to improve the program.

Post-survey (teachers)

Post-assessment (students)

Data collection and analysis

Presentation to the partners
List of Workshop Lesson Plan and Activities

The goal of the PD is to improve reading comprehension for secondary students.

To reach this goal, five objectives were selected and are as follows:

1. to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
2. to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
3. to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
4. to select complex text which is used for individual classes and enter it into the curriculum tracker for individual lessons, and

Activity List Abbreviated

Objective One:

Activity One: Defining Terms Discussion Activity.

Activity Two: Background Information Online Game Activity Using Kahoot! (Brand, 2013).

Activity Three: Background Information Discussion Activity.

Activity Four: Addressing Roadblocks Activity.

Objective Two Activities: Direct and Explicit Strategy Instruction

Activity One: Divide It Up! (Strategies, Supports, and Activities).
Activity Two: Negotiate the Strategy List.

Activity Three: Direct Instruction Discussion and Role Play.

Activity Four: Modeled Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script.

Activity Five: Practice Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script.

Activity Six: Building Background Knowledge for Explicit Instruction Jigsaw.

Activity Seven: Modeling Explicit Instruction Role Play.

Activity Eight: Building a List of Activities.

**Objective Three Activities: Complex Text Use**

Activity One: Decoding Complex Text.

Activity Two: Explicit Instruction Lesson Plan with Complex Text.

**Objective Four Activities: Scope and Sequence**

Activity One: Model and Practice with Tracking Tool.

Activity List with Description

**Objective One:** There are four activities planned in order to meet the objective of building a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility. These activities are as follows:

**Activity One: Defining Terms Discussion Activity.** The first step of building the foundational guiding beliefs is to come to an agreement of term definitions between the facilitators and the participations. This is done to avoid any confusion or misconceptions during any discourse or discussion pertaining to RCSI.
Activity Two: Background Information Online Game Activity Using Kahoot! (Brand, 2013). The second step of building foundational guiding beliefs has two goals. The first goal is to allow teachers the opportunity to showcase what they already know about reading proficiency and RCSI. The second goal is to fill in missing knowledge about or clear up any misconception teachers may have about reading proficiency and RCSI.

Activity Three: Background Information Discussion Activity. The purpose of this activity is to give participants an opportunity to discuss, share, and reflect on what they already knew and what they learned during the previous activity. The guiding question for the reflection are in the slide show itself and read as follows (see Appendix F, slide 4)

Activity Four: Addressing Roadblocks Activity. The third step of building the foundational guiding beliefs is for facilitators to address teachers’ roadblocks to teaching reading strategies.

Objective Two Activities: Direct and Explicit Strategy Instruction

There are eight activities planned in order to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,

Activity One: Divide It Up! (Strategies, Supports, and Activities). The purpose of this activity is to activate what participants already know about, come to a deeper understanding about, and to clear up any misconceptions about strategies, supports, and activities.
Activity Two: Negotiate the Strategy List. The purpose of this activity is for participants to come to agreement on strategy names and definitions.

Activity Three: Direct Instruction Discussion and Role Play. This is conducted in three parts: definition, non-example and example.

Activity Four: Modeled Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script. The purpose of this activity is for departments to create the direct instructions for one of the strategies and make it available in the collaborative folder so that all teachers have access to the created resource. This way, teachers feel they are actively engaged and create something that will authentically be used.

Activity Five: Practice Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script.

Activity Six: Building Background Knowledge for Explicit Instruction Jigsaw. Teachers have an opportunity to share activities and resources they use in their classroom currently and learn how to adapt them for RCSI. The activities in the workshop takes teachers’ prior knowledge. Explicit instruction for the RCSI professional development has three activities: building background knowledge, modeling, and practice.

Activity Seven: Modeling Explicit Instruction Role Play. The purpose of this activity is for teachers to see a strategy explicitly instructed and to reflect on their experience with explicit instruction in the classroom.

Activity Eight: Building a List of Activities. The purpose of this independent practice of explicit instruction is for teachers to brainstorm a list of guided and independent strategy practice activities.
**Objective Three Activities: Complex Text Use**

There are two activities planned in order to select complex text which is used for individual lessons.

**Activity One: Decoding Complex Text.** The purpose of this activity is to come to a comprehensive and mutual understanding of *complex text* and its use in the disciplinary classroom. It is also the purpose of the activity to build a list of types and examples of complex text so that teachers have a resource to use in the future. The resource used for this activity is *Complex Text Decoded Chapter One* by Glass, 2015 (as cited by ASCD.org).

**Activity Two: Explicit Instruction Lesson Plan with Complex Text.** The purpose of this activity is for teachers to create and practice delivering the explicit instruction lesson plan section of the *Template for RCSI Lesson Plan* (see Appendix L) using complex text from a class they are teaching.

**Objective Four Activities: Scope and Sequence**

The purpose of this part of the workshop is to partially meet the objective of to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker.

**Activity One: Model and Practice with Tracking Tool.** Disciplines determine which strategy they would like to use for which texts.
Capstone Questions

How can a systematic professional development program be designed for content area teachers that improve secondary students’ reading comprehension through direct and explicit strategy instruction?

Rationale for Topic

- Personal interest
- Observations as a teacher
- Feeling of incompetence
- PD and CUE credits
- Percentage of the tenth graders in my district were not meeting the reading standards were 39% (DOE, 2019)

Overarching Goal

Improve independent reading comprehension for secondary students.

Life-time Implications

Reading proficiency profoundly affects an individual’s lifetime success (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NIL, 2007; Wolfe & Haveman, 2001; Yagelski, 2000).

Four major themes revealed by literature review

1. Students need reading comprehension strategy instruction (RCSI) in the content area secondary classroom
2. Direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence
   a. Declarative, procedural, conditional knowledge
3. Students need to frequently use complex text
4. Teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development
**Pillars of RCSI PD based on the Literature Review**

**Theme One:**
RCSI help create independent adolescent readers and is most effective when provided in the content area classroom.

Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Boardman, et al., 2008; Condon Center, 2013; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Gabriel et al., 2016; Kamil et al., 2008; Moje, 2007; Neus, 2008; NIL, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012.

**Theme Two**
- **Declarative**
- **Procedural**
- **Conditional**


RCSI needs to be direct and explicit in order to be effective.


**Theme Three:**
complex text must frequently be used in the disciplinary classroom as a form of instruction.

Theme Four

Teachers needed to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully learn and implement RCSI in the classroom.


Objectives of RCSI PD program

1. to build guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers’ literacy responsibility,
2. to provide teachers PD for direct and explicit strategy instruction,
3. to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence
4. to select complex text which is used for individual classes
5. to provide ongoing, long-term RCSI development using coaches.

Segments of RCSI program

1. PRE-WORK: Presentation to teaching and learning administrators, selection and pre-training for RCSI coaches, pre-survey (teachers) pre-assessment (students)
2. WORKSHOP: Workshop for secondary teachers and a few administrators
3. COACHING AND COLLABORATION: On-going and long-term coaching, reflection, and collaboration with professional learning groups
4. POST-WORK: The segment includes a post-survey to the content area teacher and administrators. It also includes a post-assessment for the students to test the program’s effectiveness of raising students reading proficiency.

List of Activities - Objective One

Objective One: Defining Terms Discussion Activity.

Activity One: Background Information Online Game Activity Using Kahoot!

Activity Two: Background Information Discussion Activity.

Activity Three: Addressing Roadblocks Activity.

Activity Four: Addressing Roadblocks Activity.

Guiding Beliefs

Content area teachers have a responsibility to help build students’ reading proficiency.

Roadblocks

1. Think about Roadblocks teachers may have to RCSI.
2. Review data from teachers’ pre-survey
3. Prepare responses for questions and concerns teachers may have to RCSI
4. Be open to new ideas from teachers
List of Activities - Objective Two

Objective Two Activities: Direct and Explicit Strategy Instruction

Activity One: Divide It Up! (Strategies, Supports, and Activities).
Activity Two: Negotiate the Strategy List.
Activity Three: Direct Instruction Discussion and Role Play.
Activity Four: Modeled Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script.
Activity Five: Practice Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script.
Activity Six: Building Background Knowledge for Explicit Instruction Jigsaw.
Activity Seven: Modeling Explicit Instruction Role Play.
Activity Eight: Building a List of Activities.

List of Activities - Objective Three

Objective Three Activities: Complex Text Use

Activity One: Decoding Complex Text.
Activity Two: Explicit Instruction Lesson Plan with Complex Text.

List of Activities - Objective Four

Objective Four Activities: Scope and Sequence

Activity One: Model and Practice with Tracking Tool.

Steps of Direct and Explicit Instruction

1. Direct Instruction
   a. Name, define, and describe the strategy (declarative).
   b. Explain the purpose of the strategy and how it is useful for reading comprehension (conditional).
   c. Describe the important attributes of the strategy and how it can be modified for different situations (conditional).
   d. State the steps in using the strategy (procedural).
   e. Provide examples and nonexamples of its use (declarative, procedural, and conditional) (adapted from McEwan, 2007).

2. Explicit Instruction
   a. Model the use of the strategy using thinking aloud format (I do)
   b. Guided practice (We do)
   c. Independent practice (You do)

Scope and Sequence: Using AtlasNext (Faria Education Group, 2020)

The purpose of this part of the workshop is to partially meet the objective of building a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker.
Scope and Sequence

Using AtlasNext (2020) Curriculum Tracking Tool to create scope and sequence for RCSI.

Segment Three: Coaching and Collaboration

- Coaching Role,
- Training,
- Coaching Conversations,
- Demonstrations,
- School Services, and
- Characteristics of a Coach.

Objective Five

to provide teachers with ongoing, long-term RCSI development using coaches.

Coaches Roles

- Partnership Coaching: Open-ended reflective questions to unlock learners wisdom and steer coachee toward meeting the program’s objectives.
- Demonstrations
  - Data collection and synthesis
  - Coach reflection of progress
  - Student data collection

Help teachers meet first 4 objectives of the program

The goal of the PD is to improve reading comprehension for secondary students. Coaches assist teachers in meeting the five objectives of the RCSI PD program:

1. To build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
2. To provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with explicit and explicit strategy instruction,
3. To build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
4. To select complex text which is used for individual classes and enter it into the curriculum tracker for individual lessons, and
5. To provide teachers with ongoing, long-term RCSI development using similar discipline specific coaches.

Not a Responsibility

- No Observations
- Confidential Coaching Conversations
- No small group pull out
Characteristics of Coaches

To apply, applications are to fill out the RCSI Literacy Coach Selection Questions (see Appendix Q) and provide a current resume. Final selection of the coaches is conducted by the coordinator and the partners of the program.

Learning Objectives for Coaches

- Literacy coaches learn and share how to encourage participation
- Literacy coaches learn and share how to do a successful in-class demonstration
- Literacy coaches learn and share how to craft good open-ended questions
- Literacy coaches learn and share how to collect and interpret the data
- Literacy coaches learn and share how to navigate resistance

Segment Four: Post-Work

- Post-survey to teachers
- Post-assessment for students
- Coaches collect, synthesize, reflect on data
- Present to partners

Cost

- Coach compensation: 8 coaches x $1000 = $8000/yr
- One copy per coach: Toll’s (2014) book The Literacy Coach’s Survival Guide: Essential Questions and Practical Answers. 8 x $10 = $80

Timeline

- November 2020: Presentation to the teaching and learning administration
- August 2021, 2022, 2023: Pre-survey for the teachers, post-assessment for students, selection, and training of coaches (including a 6-week book study)
- October 2021: Workshop where teachers and administration learn and partially meet the objectives of the program
- November 2021 – March 2024: Ongoing, long-term training using coaches and PLC collaboration
- March 2022, 2023, 2024: Post-survey for teachers, assessment of students and evaluation of the program effectiveness by facilitators and administrators, coaches

Coaches Responsibilities

- Training
  - Workshop for RCSI
  - Webinar: Better Conversations (Knight, led by Hoffman (2020), written by Kelly (2020))
  - Trimester collaborative coaches meeting:
    - Coaching Conversations
      - Individual
      - Discipline-Specific Groups
    - Demonstrations
    - School services
### Future Implications

- Student
- District
- Professional

### Final Thoughts

- More to reading comprehension than RCSI
- RCSI can make a difference
RCSI Literacy Coach Selection
Questions

The answers to these questions help determine if you would be a good fit to be an RCSI literacy coach. Please make sure you send your updated resume to [someone@email.com].

* Required

1. First and Last Name *

2. What makes you want to be a literacy coach? *

3. Tell about a time when you impacted a colleague's learning. *

4. How to have you built trust and respect in a new relationship. *

5. Describe your experience with reading comprehension strategy instruction. *

6. Talk through a time you used complex text in the classroom. *
7. Describe a time when you helped your students with comprehending text in the classroom. *

8. Do you consider yourself a listener or an explainer? Write a little more about that. *

9. What else would you like to share about your interest in this position? *

Thank you for your interest in this position. Someone will get back to you within the next couple of weeks.

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APPENDIX E

RCSI in the Content Area Classroom Pre-Survey

The purpose of this pre-assessment is to judge content area classroom teacher's background knowledge about reading comprehension strategy instruction. Please fill out the survey to the best of your knowledge so that we can customize your professional development experience. * Required

1. Rate your knowledge and ability of reading comprehension strategy instruction (RCSI) *

Mark only one oval.

☐ I am not familiar with this topic
☐ I have some familiarity about this topic
☐ I have working knowledge about this topic
☐ I can implement or explain this topic with some success
☐ I am an expert on this topic and teach others

2. How familiar are you with reading comprehension strategies? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3. Have you ever taught reading comprehension strategies in your classroom? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Maybe
4. If yes, what strategies have you taught or used?

__________________________

5. As a content area teacher, rate your responsibility for teaching reading comprehension strategy instruction in your classroom.

Mark only one oval.

☐ no responsibility

☐ mid responsibility

☐ high responsibility

6. If you were asked to teach reading comprehension strategies in your content area classroom, what hesitations, if any, would you have? (if none, write NONE)

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________
7. Please check your content area *

*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] English Language Arts
- [ ] Mathematics
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Social Studies
- [ ] World Language
- [ ] Physical Education and Health
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Business
- [ ] Technical Arts

8. Rate your enthusiasm for implementing RCSI in your classroom. *

*Mark only one oval.*

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<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Super excited!</td>
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RCSI RD Program Workshop Manual and Presentation

Dayna Hillcrest

Four major themes revealed by literature review

1. Students need RCSI in the content area secondary classroom to learn how to comprehend complex text,
2. Teachers need to use direct and explicit strategy instruction with a scope and sequence in order for the strategy instruction to be effective,
3. Students need to frequently use complex text as their main source of learning in the disciplinary classroom, and
4. Teachers need to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully instruct reading comprehension strategies.

Overarching Goal

Improve independent reading comprehension for secondary students.

Objectives of Systematic RCSI PD program

1. to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility,
2. to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction,
3. to build a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker,
4. to select complex text which is used for individual classes and enter it into the curriculum tracker for individual lessons,
5. to provide teachers with ongoing, long-term RCSI development using similar discipline coaches.

Segments of RCSI program

1. PRE-WORK: presentation to teaching and learning administrators, selection and pre-training for RCSI coaches, pre-survey (teachers) pre-assessment (students)
2. WORKSHOP: workshop for secondary teachers and a few administrators
3. COACHING AND COLLABORATION: on-going and long-term coaching, reflection, and collaboration with professional learning groups
4. POST-WORK: The segment includes a post-survey to the content area teacher and administrators. It also includes a post-assessment for the students to test the program’s effectiveness of raising students reading proficiency.

Objective one:

to build a foundation of guiding beliefs about literacy importance and content area teachers literacy responsibility
Activity One: Defining Terms Discussion Activity

1. Click on the definitions
2. Read through
3. Reflect with group
   a. Do any of these terms have a different meaning than you expected? If so, which? How are they different?
   b. On which terms would you like more clarification?

KAHOOT!

Activity Two: Background Information Online Game Activity Using Kahoot! (Brand, 2013).

Activity Three: Background Information Discussion Activity

1. What did you already know about the importance of reading proficiency in the content area classroom and over the course of an individual’s lifetime? What information was new?
2. What is your understanding of teachers’ role and responsibility in building reading proficient students in their classroom?
3. Respond to the research about complex text use in and its deletion from disciplinary instruction.
   a. Do you see it as a common practice in your school?
   b. What type of complex text do you use in your classroom?

Roadblocks

Guiding Beliefs

Reading proficiency profoundly affects an individual’s lifetime success (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006, NIL, 2007; Wolfe & Haveman, 2001; Yagelski, 2000).

Guiding Beliefs

That content area teachers have a responsibility to help build students’ reading proficiency (CCSS, 2020).
Guiding Beliefs

RCSI help create independent adolescent readers and is most effective when provided in the content area classroom

Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Boardman, et al., 2008; Cezar Center, 2013; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Gabriel et al., 2016; Kamil et al., 2008; Moje, 2007; Ness, 2008; NIL, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012).

that RCSI needs to be direct and explicit in order to be effective


Guiding Beliefs

complex text must frequently be used in the disciplinary classroom as a form of instruction


Guiding Beliefs

teachers needed to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully learn and implement RCSI in the classroom


Building Background Knowledge

● Declarative
● Procedural
● Conditional

Objective Two

to provide teachers training, collaboration, and practice opportunities with direct and explicit strategy instruction
Activity One: Strategies, Supports, and Activities

- In table groups,
- brainstorm a list of acts you perform or have your students perform in order to access comprehension from reading in their classrooms and classify if that action is a strategy, support, or activity.
- Justify your decision.

Activity Two: Negotiate the Strategy List

Seven Strategies of the RCSI Program
Think about classes you teach
1. Which of these strategies would be useful?
2. Which strategies do you already use?
3. Do you use other strategies not listed here?

Activity Three: Direct Instruction Discussion and Role Play

1. Direct Instruction
   a. Name, define, and describe the strategy (declarative).
   b. Explain the purpose of the strategy and how it is useful for reading comprehension (conditional).
   c. Describe the important attributes of the strategy and how it can be modified for different situations. (conditional).
   d. State the steps in using the strategy (procedural).
   e. Provide examples and nonexamples of its use (declarative, procedural, and conditional) (adapted from McEwan, 2007).

Turn-n-Talk (Activity Three cont.)

1. What is the purpose of direct instruction?
2. How is this similar or different to your experience?
3. What is declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge?
### Activity Four: Model Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script

The purpose of this activity is for departments to create the direct instructions for one of the strategies and make it available in the collaborative folder so that all teachers have access to the created resource.

1. Facilitators model direct instruction
   a. Choose strategy from Instructional Aid 1.1 Seven Strategies of Highly Effective Readers
   b. Make copy of template Template for RCSI Lesson Plan
   c. Read chapter on that strategy
   d. Consult other resources, confer with colleagues
   e. Share out

2. In discipline similar groups, go through the process

### Activity Five: Practice Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script

The purpose of this activity is for departments to create the direct instructions for one of the strategies and make it available in the collaborative folder so that all teachers have access to the created resource.

In discipline similar groups, go through the process

1. Choose strategy from Seven Strategies of the RCSI Program
2. Make copy of template Template for RCSI Lesson Plan
3. Read chapter on that strategy
4. Consult other resources, confer with colleagues
5. Share out

### Direct Practice Reflection Question (Activity Five cont.)

1. What was easy for you to do in this activity?
2. What part of writing the script was challenging?
3. In what ways did your understanding of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge shift?

### Activity Six: Building Background Knowledge for Explicit Instruction Jigsaw

The purpose for this activity is that all participants express a mutual understanding of the parts of explicit instruction.

- Modeling the use of the strategy using the thinking aloud format.
- Guided practice provided by the teacher.
- Independent practice with teacher feedback and supervision.

### Jigsaw (Activity Six cont.)

2. Prepare to share in trios with people who read a different chapter
   a. What was the main purpose of the chapter?
   b. How does this action fit into explicit instruction?
   c. What additional information or experience can connect to what you read?

### Pages for Jigsaw (Activity Six cont.)

The pages are from McEwan’s (2007) 40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms, Grades 6-12 and are as follows:

- Chapter Two (Engage in Teacher and Student Think-Alouds Daily, p. 7-12),
- Chapter Fourteen (Use the I Do It, We Do It, You Do It Lesson Plan, p. 63-66),
- Chapter Fifteen (Provide Models, Example, and Nonexamples, p. 67-70).
Activity Seven: Modeling Explicit Instruction Role Play.

Explicit Instruction Steps:

- Model the use of the strategy using thinking aloud format (I do)
- Guided practice (We do)
- Independent practice (You do)

Four Elements - RCSI Activities (Activity Seven cont.)

Elements to help pick and adapt activities for guided and independent practice:

- Drawing from experience of helping access students comprehend text
- Referencing McEwan’s, (2007) and other resources
- Conferring with colleagues, other PLCs, or coaches
- Use the RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier (see Appendix M) to ensure that the selected activities were used or adapted to scaffold students to independent strategy use.

Activity Eight: Building a List of Activities.

- In PLCs, refer to the direct instruction lesson plan
- Brainstorm list of guided and independent activities using first three elements and other resources to discuss and confer activities
- Using the RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier,
- enter activities here: RCSI Guided and Independent Activity List
- In trios with different disciplines, share activities

Activity One: Decoding Complex Text

Complex Text Decoded chapter one

1. In groups of four with one disciplinary representative
2. Read assigned section
3. Take notes. Provide a summary of your section. How does the section align with your current belief about complex text? How does this section challenge your current belief? What other reactions or ideas did the group have? What are some examples and nonexamples of written complex text?
4. Build Complex Text List
5. Share out to large group

Objective Three

to select complex text which is used for individual lessons

Discuss in disciplinary groups (Activity Seven cont.)

How does this format help students read?

How is this similar or different to what you believe to be true about explicit instruction?

If you were to edit this plan, what would you change?
• Complex Text and Disciplinary Literacy
• What is Complex Text?
• What Standards Address Text Complexity?
• Who Should Teach Complex Text?
• Why Is It Important to Engage Students in Complex Text?
• What Does Close Reading Mean?
• Closing (Glass, 2015)

**Activity Two: Explicit Instruction Lesson Plan with Complex Text.**
1. Think of a complex text from a class (you may work individually or in groups)
2. Continue working on building the lesson from the Write Your Own Direct Lesson Plan Activity using Template for RCSI Lesson Plan. Teachers may choose to use a different strategy if they wish.
3. Think of some modeling, guided, and independent activities.
4. Use the RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier to check to make sure the activities that you have chosen scaffold students toward independent use of a reading strategy.
5. Plan a explicit strategy instruction lesson plan using the complex text selected.
6. Practice your lesson plan with at least one other person or group.

**Essential Parts of Explicit Instruction lesson plan (Activity Two cont.)**
Facilitators stress the three essential parts of explicit instruction lesson plan which are the following:
1. Model the use of the strategy using thinking aloud format (I do). Teachers should write out what they would say in order to model the use of the strategy with that complex text.
2. Guided practice (We do). Teachers describe as many activities as they feel are necessary in order to scaffold students with more independence.
3. Independent practice (You do). Teachers describe at least one activity that shows that the student can employ the strategy for comprehension of complex text.

**Remember (Activity Two cont.):**
Elements to help pick and adapt activities for guided and independent practice:
• Drawing from experience of helping access students comprehend text
• Referencing McEwan’s, (2007) on that strategy or other resources
• Confer with colleagues or coaches
• Use the RCSI activity verifier (see supplemental material) to ensure that the selected activities were used or adapted to scaffold students to independent strategy use.

**Objective Four Activities: Scope and Sequence**
The purpose of this part of the workshop is to partially meet the objective of building a departmental and school-wide scope and sequence of strategy instruction and enter it into the curriculum tracker.
**Scope and Sequence**

Using AtlasNext (2020) Curriculum Tracking Tool to create scope and sequence for RCSI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Topic</td>
<td>Understand key concepts</td>
<td>Read textbook chapter</td>
<td>View video tutorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatomy of the Organism</td>
<td>Identify major organs</td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td>Simulation exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiology of Cells</td>
<td>Explain cell functions</td>
<td>Lab experiment</td>
<td>Online module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathophysiology</td>
<td>Analyze disease processes</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>Interactive simulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please refer to the attached Curriculum Tracking Tool for detailed entries.*
9.13.2.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; trace the text’s explanation or depiction of a complex process, phenomenon, or concept; provide an accurate summary of the text.

**Directions**: Read the complex text provided by the teacher. Complete the following worksheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the central ideas or conclusion of the text?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Write an accurate summary of the text.

Mark yes or no for the following questions: (Teacher provides comprehension question to answer based on text.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Explain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from J. Josephs, personal communication, January 22, 2020.
APPENDIX H
RCSI PD Definitions

The following appendix contains terms used in this capstone including complex text, reading comprehension, reading comprehension strategies, reading comprehension strategy instruction, and types of reading comprehension strategies.

**Alternative mediums.** Using alternative forms other than text to deliver content information such as videos, notes, pictures, lecture, or discussions.

**Complex text.** Complex text is a written word which requires close or deep reading that causes the reader to use processes such as deductive reasoning and making inferences (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009). Complex text describes the disciplinary texts found in the secondary classroom such as a chemistry textbook, English Language Arts (ELA) literature anthology, or woodworking manual.

**Conditional knowledge.** Conditional knowledge refers to the awareness of when and where to use specific strategies. Students must see that the strategy can be used in several different situations and may be altered or combined with other strategies to meet the demand (Baker 2002). When students understand the utility and flexible use of strategy, they have developed conditional knowledge of a strategy. Students built conditional knowledge through the combined use of direct and explicit instruction (Afflerbach, 2002; Dole & Pearson, 1987; Duffy, 2002; Nokes & Dole, 2004; and Roehler & Duffy, 1984).
**Declarative Knowledge.** Declarative knowledge refers to the ability to name, have an analytic discussion about, and create group consensus of understanding about a strategy. The student is able to explain the strategy including its use, purpose, and critical attributes, (McEwan, 2007).

**Direct Instruction.** In direct instruction, the teacher names, defines, describes, and discusses the strategy and its use so that students develop declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge needed for use on an independent metacognitive level.

**Explicit Instruction.** This means that the teacher provides overt modeling of the steps to employ the independent strategy use and the conditions where the strategy would be useful to aid in reading comprehension. Researchers McEwan (2015), NIL (2007), and Nokes and Dole (2004) divided explicit instruction into three parts including teacher modeling, guided practice, and independent practice.

**Guided practice.** Refers to practice where the students become involved. Instructor Warner, M. (n.d.) described guided practice as guiding the student to use what they have learned through a group or cooperative learning activity. The teacher’s role is to monitor, help, and provide feedback on the activity (Warner, M., n.d., para. 5).

**Independent practice.** Instructor Warner, M. (n.d.) described independent practice as a practice provided by the teacher where the student has an opportunity to “solo”...whatever you’ve led them to in the input and guided practice parts of the lesson
The gradual release of use of the strategy is imperative so that students practice using the strategies independently.

**Lexile.** Refers to a qualitative measurement used to rate the readability of a book and the ability of the reader (Wikipedia.com, n.d.). Lexile is based on the vocabulary, sentence length, and sentence complexity used by the text or the reader.

**Literacy.** Literacy includes the ability to read and comprehend text, write explicating the meaning of text, and use higher level thinking skills (A. Preppernau, personal communication, May 4, 2016; Town-Gunderson, J., personal communication, ed., June 14, 2019).

**Partners.** In addition to the teachers and indirectly the students, coaches are accountable to the administration of Teaching & Learning, the high school principal, program coordinators, and key ELA staff members.

**Partnership coaching.** Partnership coaching is a coaching approach where coaches and teachers or discipline specific groups engage in conversations to unpack, explore, and problem solve ways to meet the objectives of the RCSI PD program.

**Procedural knowledge.** Procedural knowledge. Procedural knowledge refers to students’ understanding of the procedures behind the strategy. Students understand the steps necessary to employ the specific strategy and what benefits they can expect by using the strategy. Because of this knowledge they are able to use the strategy independently to aid in their comprehension of what they are reading. Research suggested that using explicit
instruction which includes modeling, guided practice, and independent practice builds procedural knowledge (Nokes & Dole, 2004).

**Reading comprehension.** Researchers Duke and Carlisle (2011) describe comprehension as extracting and constructing meaning from spoken word or written text. Reading comprehension means understanding what is read (Fry & Kress, 2006). Dictionary.com describes reading comprehension as the “capacity of the mind to perceive and understand; power to grasp ideas; ability to know” (4).

**Reading comprehension strategies.** A reading comprehension strategy is a metacognitive mechanism which students use to assist in independently understanding what they are reading. The strategies are used purposefully and consciously when the text is particularly challenging to the reader (Alexander & Jetton, 2002). Enabling students to independently comprehend text is the goal of reading comprehension strategies. A strategy becomes a skill when it is used automatically and without thought by the reader in the act of reading (Alexander & Jetton, 2002; Nokes & Dole, 2002).

**Reading supports.** Refers to tools outside of the students ability which aids in completion of a task such as a teacher provided template or graphic organizer, teacher explanation, peer assistance, a read-aloud application, pictures, tables or graphs.

**Thinking aloud (or Think-Aloud).** Thinking aloud is a metacognitive activity in which teachers verbalize their thinking while processing the meaning of text (McEwan, 2007). It is used during explicit instruction in order to model how to use a reading strategy.
Types of reading comprehension strategies. Reading comprehension strategies can be employed before, during and after-reading depending on the type of text and the specific reading challenge. Examples of reading comprehension strategies include monitoring what was read, adjusting reading pace, rereading, using self-generated or provided graphic organizers, answering and creating questions, recognizing story or informational text structures, previewing text, reviewing content, retelling, annotating, highlighting, taking notes, summarizing, making use of prior knowledge, using mental imagery, making a vocabulary list, and talking about what was read (American Federation of Teachers [AFT] 2014; Fry & Kress, 2006). Reading comprehension strategies are not limited to these on this list.

Reading comprehension strategy instruction (RCSI). This term refers to a lesson of what is and how to employ a specific reading comprehension strategy. The instruction is delivered from the teacher and includes guided and independent practice of the strategy by the student. This instruction also includes corrective feedback and a scope and sequence.
APPENDIX H

Building Background Information using Kahoot! (www.kahoot.com)

This document contains the questions and answers for the Building Background Information to help build the guiding beliefs for the participants. The online activity called Building Background Information using Kahoot! (see Appendix I) which is a game based educational learning technology, Kahoot! (Brand, 2013), was determined to be the best format to accomplish these two goals. In this activity, teachers would be asked to work in pairs to answer the timed, multiple choice questions which helped build background knowledge for all participants to reach agreement on the foundational guiding beliefs. Information about each question using references was prepared so that facilitators could provide evidence for the answers. The questions and answers in the activity were designed to build the foundational guiding beliefs that proficiency profoundly affects an individual’s lifetime success, that content area teachers have a responsibility to help build students’ reading proficiency, complex text must be used in the disciplinary classroom, and that RCSI helps create independent adolescent readers.

This is the script for the Building Background Knowledge Activity

1. What percentage of 10th-graders were reading at grade level according to the 2019 MCA test results?
   a. 91%
   b. 81%
   c. 71%
   d. 61%
D. 61 %. The *DOE Report Card* stated that 39% of the high schoolers in this district did not meet the standards in reading (DOE, 2019).

2. Whose job at the school is it to help secondary students become reading proficient?
   a. All teachers
   b. Reading specialists
   c. English Language Teachers
   d. Content area teachers

a. All teachers. Researchers Kamil et al. (2008) found that RCSI is most effective when delivered by the content area teacher and that discipline-specific RCSI was critical for students to succeed in reading secondary level content class texts. Taking time to teach RCSI allowed students to extract more information from their texts, made comprehension easier for the students, and allowed the class to cover more content in the long run.

3. High school students need to be taught reading comprehension strategies.
   a. True
   b. False

a. True. Researcher Ness (2008) found in her study that many teachers assumed that students understood the text that they were reading. The teacher overlooked why the students’ performance in the class did not meet expectations. The teacher misdiagnosed the underlining roadblock to engagement with the discipline content. The student’s actual issue was that the student did not possess the reading comprehension strategies required to extract meaning from the text. Providing RCSI was not found as part of the secondary
school culture and not found to be used as a solution to low performance in disciplinary classrooms (Ness, 2008).

4. There is a connection between the level of schooling of a student and their life-time earnings.
   a. True
   b. False

a. True. Researchers Wolfe and Haveman (2002) found a positive link between an individual’s schooling and the return for that individual's economic and market productivity including the level of wage earnings, life-time earnings, employment rates, savings, consumer choices, and charitable giving.

5. Reading literacy impacts a student's life expectancy.
   a. True
   b. False

a. True. Researchers found a relationship between an individual’s literacy and their social well-being benefits such as longer life expectancy, level of education, happiness, donating, and volunteerism (Williams, 2010). The effects of literacy on the emotional, social, academic, physical health of an individual were found to have profound individual and intergenerational impacts (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

6. Nationally, schools invested in the development of reading literacy skills equally across grade levels.
   a. True
   b. False
b. False. Nationally, schools invested in the development of early elementary reading literacy skills but there was a lack of reading literacy strategy instruction in the secondary classroom (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Cantrell & Carter, 2009).

7. Taking time to teach RCSI would reduce time for content in the discipline classes.
   a. True
   b. False

b. False. Researchers Rissman, Miller, and Torgesen (2009) stated that “They [teachers] can help students develop the knowledge, reading, strategies, and thinking skills to understand and learn from increasingly complex text in their content areas” (as cited by Ceedar Center, 2013 p. 13). Each discipline has specialized vocabulary, text features, and reading aspects that are unique to that discipline.

8. A reading comprehension strategy is any act conducted in the classroom (such as pre-teaching students vocabulary, small group discussions, building background knowledge for students, providing questions for students to answer to guide reading and test comprehension).
   a. True
   b. False

b. False. Reading Comprehension Strategies. A reading comprehension strategy is a metacognitive mechanism which students use to assist in independently understanding what they are reading. The strategies are used purposefully and consciously when the text is particularly challenging to the reader (Alexander & Jetton, 2002). Enabling students to
independently comprehend text is the goal of reading comprehension strategies. A strategy becomes a skill when it is used automatically and without thought by the reader in the act of reading (Alexander & Jetton, 2002; Nokes & Dole, 2002).

9. Reciprocal Teaching is a(n)...
   a. Activity
   b. Support
   c. Activity and support
   d. Strategy

C. Activity and support. This act helps the student comprehend a specific text, but does not teach students direct and explicitly how to independently employ a strategy on a metacognitive level. There are strategies used in the activity of reciprocal teaching: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. However, this is the practice of using those strategies, not the strategy itself.

10. It is sufficient to model reading strategies. Students are able to use them if they see how to use them.
   a. True
   b. False

By directly explaining the idiosyncrasies of a strategy, teachers provide students metacognitive awareness of the strategy which starts their journey of independently using them. It is not merely enough to name the strategy, to mention which strategy to use, or to assume that students will know how to use specific strategies if they see it modeled in use
by the teacher (Durkin, 1978). This in-depth discussion is needed for students to fully understand the strategy and its use. (p.31)

In order for students to use reading comprehension strategies, researchers Afflerbach (2002), Dole and Pearson (1987), Nokes and Dole (2004), and Duffy (2002) confirmed Roehler and Duffy’s (1984) initial findings that students needed to have knowledge on three levels: declarative, procedural, and conditional. These levels of knowledge provided metacognition of the strategy enabling the student to recognize that there has been a breakdown in comprehension, determine which strategy to use, and have the knowledge to employ the strategy to fix comprehension (p. 30).

11. Student failure to process complex text does not affect content area knowledge. Students can get information through videos, lectures, or simplified notes.

   a. True
   b. False

Researchers Boardman et al. (2008) argued that the denial of complex text use prevented students from accessing content in all subjects. They found that students failed to learn how to process challenging texts and claimed that this prevented them from accessing grade-level content in mathematics, history, and science (p.39).

12. As a content area teacher, I am required by the Common Core State Standards to incorporate ELA standards into my curriculum.

   a. True x
   b. False
In addition to the evidence that supporting readers in the discipline classrooms benefits secondary students, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative (2020, www.commoncore.org), commonly referred to as the standards, require content area teachers to provide students with opportunities to build literacy skills. Specifically, *The CCSS for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, provide grade level benchmarks in disciplines to guide and assist students with literacy proficiency to prepare for life beyond the classroom. The CCSS Initiative for ELA in the content area classroom was described as follows:

The standards establish guidelines for English language arts (ELA) as well as for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Because students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, the standards promote the literacy skills and concepts required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines ([http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/), para. 3).

These standards obligate teachers to incorporate into their curriculum ways which develop reading proficiency for their students.

**Summary**

In Summary, the purpose for building guiding beliefs about student proficiency and RCSI was determined necessary so that all participants would become fully committed to the program’s objectives. The guiding beliefs of the program founded on the literature review from Chapter Two are as follows:
● Reading proficiency profoundly affects an individual’s lifetime success (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NIL, 2007; Wolfe & Haveman, 2001; Yagelski, 2000).

● Content area teachers have a responsibility to help build students’ reading proficiency (CCSS, 2020, J. Josephs, personal communication, May 18, 2020).

● RCSI help create independent adolescent readers and is most effective when provided in the content area classroom (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Boardman, et al., 2008; Ceedar Center, 2013; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Gabriel et al., 2016; Kamil et al., 2008; Moje, 2007; Ness, 2008; NIL, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012).

● RCSI needs to be direct and explicit in order to be effective (AFT, 2014; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Boardman, et al., 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Kamil et al., 2008; Green, n.d.; NIL, 2007; Ness, 2008; Nokes & Dole, 2004 Roehler & Duffy, 1984; McEwan, 2007; Warner, n.d).

● Complex text must frequently be used in the disciplinary classroom as a form of instruction (Adams, 2010; AFT, 2014; Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Armbruster, 2001; CCSS, 2020; J. Burling, personal communication, May 2019; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Glass, 2015; Gomez & Gomez, 2007; NIL 2007; A. Preppernau, personal communication, June 11, 2020; Schmoker, 2018; Shanahan, 2020)

● Teachers needed to be provided coherent, ongoing, and long-term professional development in order to successfully learn and implement RCSI in the classroom Brown et al., 1996; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008 as cited in Vanderburg & Stephens,
## APPENDIX J

### Seven Strategies of the RCSI Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Self-Directed Activities</th>
<th>Page numbers in book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activitate</td>
<td>Students stimulate prior knowledge they have from experiences or memory to aid in text comprehension.</td>
<td>Skimming, talking to someone, referring to past work</td>
<td>P. 13-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infer</td>
<td>Taking what is written in the text, what is unwritten in the text (but implied), and using what is already known in order to construct meaning.</td>
<td>Think-Alouds</td>
<td>P. 17-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor-Clarify</td>
<td>Thinking about the reading, noticing when comprehension is impeded, and then taking steps to fix confusion or mix-ups.</td>
<td>Reading slower, rereading, making a graphic organizer, asking a questions, highlighting</td>
<td>P. 24-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Constructing questions for the author, self, peers, and adults for the purpose of seeking answers about the text.</td>
<td>KWL chart, writing a list of questions while reading the text, writing in the margins</td>
<td>P. 29-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search-Select</td>
<td>Searching for answers from a variety of sources to</td>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>P. 33-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Additional Tools</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Encapsulating the meaning of the text in their own words and shortened version.</td>
<td>Academic notebooks, making graphic organizers, highlighting key information</td>
<td>P. 39-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualize-Organize</td>
<td>Using mental imagery or graphic organizers to imagine and comprehend the meaning of text</td>
<td>Pausing for reflection, drawing an image, using a graphic organizer,</td>
<td>P. 45-62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from “Instructional Aid 1.1 Seven Strategies of Highly Effective Readers” by E. K. McEwan, 2007, *40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms. Grades 6-12*, p. 3 Copyright 2007 by Corwin Press.
APPENDIX K

Example and Non-Example Direct Instruction Script

Non-Example Script

Facilitators roleplay a non-example of teachers skipping the direct instruction of a strategy instruction. There is a misconception that if teachers skip the direct instruction, but see the strategy in action, students will know how to employ the strategy.

Example Script

Facilitators model the instruction of activating using direct instruction as if the teachers were students in a classroom. Facilitators take their time with this explanation, pausing to ask if anyone needs any clarifications. The reason this strategy is chosen is that it is important that participants see the difference between teacher-led activities and transferring responsibility to the students. In the school where the PD is scheduled to take place, it is the culture for the teacher to lead activating through activities or direct instruction, but not to teach students how to activate for themselves. A gradual release of strategy use responsibility must take place from teacher to student through scaffold activities. The purpose of the second part of this
activity is for participants to gain appreciation for the depth of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge that the student requires in order to cognitively use the strategy.

**Activity Four: Modeled Writing Your Own Direct Instruction Script**

The purpose of this activity is for departments to create the direct instructions for one of the strategies and make it available in the collaborative folder so that all teachers have access to the created resource. This way, teachers feel they are actively engaged and create something that will authentically be used.

First, facilitators model how they created the script for the strategy of activating. Facilitators tell participants that the first step was to read the corresponding chapter in McEwan’s (2007) book *40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms. Grades 6-12* (in this case it was Chapter Three, p. 13-17). Next, facilitators verbalize their cognitive processes of how they connected what they read, to what they already knew and had experienced about their strategy using a think-aloud. Facilitators acknowledge that teachers already use this process to model for their students in the classroom, and that, the facilitator will be modeling it for them for this next part. Then, facilitators verbalize how they were thinking while they wrote the script of what they would say when directly instructing the strategy of activating.

**Template for RCSI Lesson Plan**

Discipline: 

Grade: 

Strategy: 

Texts used:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Script</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Direct Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Name, define, and describe the strategy (declarative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Explain the purpose of the strategy and how it is useful for reading comprehension (conditional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Describe the important attributes of the strategy and how it can be modified for different situations. (conditional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. State the steps in using the strategy (procedural)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Provide examples and nonexamples of its use (declarative, procedural, and conditional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Explicit Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Model the use of the strategy using thinking aloud format (I do)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Guided practice (We do)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Independent practice (You do)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from “Instructional Aid 1.2 A Lesson Template for Teaching Cognitive Strategies” by E.K. McEwan, 2007, 40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in the Content Classrooms, Grades 6-12, p. 4. Copyright 2007 by Corwin Press.
### APPENDIX L

**Template for RCSi Lesson Plan**

**Discipline:**

**Grade:**

**Strategy:**

**Texts used:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Script</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Direct Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Name, define, and describe the strategy (declarative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Explain the purpose of the strategy and how it is useful for reading comprehension (conditional)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Describe the important attributes of the strategy and how it can be modified for different situations. (conditional)</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. State the steps in using the strategy (procedural)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Provide examples and nonexamples of its use (declarative, procedural, and conditional)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Explicit Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Model the use of the strategy using thinking aloud format (I do)</td>
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<td>b. Guided practice (We do)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Independent practice (You do)</td>
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</table>
Adapted from “Instructional Aid 1.2 A Lesson Template for Teaching Cognitive Strategies” by E.K. McEwan, 2007. 40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in the Content Classrooms, Grades 6-12, p. 4. Copyright 2007 by Corwin Press.
APPENDIX M

RCSI Explicit Instruction Activity Verifier (the activity verifier)

Which strategy is being taught?

What is the name of the activity?

What is the success criteria for the activity?

Describe the activity including whether it is for guided or independent practice.

Does the activity help the student learn how to use reading strategies by themselves?

If yes, in what ways?

If not, how can you adapt the activity so that it achieves that goal?

Reflect: How did the activity work?

What needs to be adjusted for next time?
# APPENDIX N

**RCSI Guided and Independent Activity List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strategy practice</th>
<th>Guided (rate 1 - 5*)</th>
<th>Independent (rate 1 - 5*)</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Guided Activity

1 - Heavy teacher guidance, 3 - Medium teacher guidance, 5 - Almost independent

*Independent Activity

1 - First step toward independence, but still needs teacher guidance, 3 - On the way to being fully independent, 5 - Fully independent strategy use
APPENDIX O

Complex Text Tracker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Text</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Strategy Practice</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
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APPENDIX P

AtlasNext Online Curriculum Tracking Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Description/ Course Outcomes</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Standards for Course</th>
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<td>❑ Drop Down</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of Learning</th>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Fillable Field:</td>
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<tr>
<td>List units by name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope &amp; Sequence (How long are units? When are they taught?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Timeline Tool: drag and drop and arrange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Name: ___________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habits of Tiger for Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Drop Down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELA Habits of Mind for Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Drop Down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>❑ Essential Standards for Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Unit Objectives | Analysis-Level Questions for Discussion + Writing | Content-Specific Vocabulary Terms:

Unit Assessment (How will we know if students obtained the desired results?)

- Success Criteria (What does student work look like when students demonstrate the understandings of the unit?)
  - Drop Down: Click here for success criteria types
  - Fillable Field: Actual Success Criteria (copy or link)

- Assessment Method (What is the best way for students to demonstrate the success criteria above?)
  - Drop Down: Click here for assessment method options
  - Drop Down: Taxonomy of Assessment (*Must match taxonomy of the targets… If there are multiple levels of taxonomy, indicate the highest level)
    - Knowledge Utilization
    - Analysis
    - Comprehension
    - Retrieval

- Assessment Type
  Drop Down
    - Formative
    - Summative

- Unit Assessment
  - Fillable Field:
    Written Description of Assessment - what is included, how is it conducted, by whom?
Reading Comprehension Strategies Taught (each complex text lists specific strategy used or practiced.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of complex text</th>
<th>Name and pages of text</th>
<th>Strategy instructed and used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualizing-organizing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Technology Use

Drop Down of ISTE Standards (each standard lists specific technology tools/resources)

- Empowered Learner
- Global Collaborator
- Digital Citizen
- Creative Communicator
- Knowledge Constructor
- Innovative Designer
Computational Thinker

Unit Plan

Number of Lessons/Approximate Time: _______________
Technology: ISTE Standard for Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Learning Target(s)</th>
<th>Taxonomy Drop Down</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do we expect our students to learn?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guaranteed Learning Tasks*</th>
<th>Taxonomy Drop Down</th>
<th>Fillable Field: Specific Activities/Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the tasks that every student will complete, regardless of classroom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Criteria</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How will we know when they are learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Method</th>
<th>Taxonomy Drop Down</th>
<th>Drop Down: Assessment Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the best way for students to demonstrate the success criteria?</td>
<td>Taxonomy of Questions or Task (not Method)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tasks*
Check for Understanding

Observation of Student Work/Task or **Hinge Question**

**Planning for Classroom-Based MTSS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 2: Scaffolding</th>
<th>Tier 2+ Extension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How will we respond when they are not learning?</td>
<td>How will we respond if they already know it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Success Criteria</strong> “What is Skill-Based Extension?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guaranteed Resources (Every student gets access to this)**

- Complex text type pages or sections
  - articles
  - information-rich text supplements
  - case studies
- discussion/debate questions, writing prompts
- field trips, experiences, events
- service-learning opportunities, business partnerships
- speakers, videos

**Optional Resource Repository** (What are options for teachers to use, depending on time and preferences?)

Narrative and/or links

APPENDIX Q

Book Study Schedule for RCSI Literacy Coaching

The following outline of the book study is based on the *The Literacy Coach’s Survival Guide: Essential Questions and Practical Answers* (adapted from Toll, 2014, p. iii-v).

Please read the following chapters for the corresponding week and answer the reflection questions provided at the beginning of the chapter. You will also be asked to prepare templates needed for the program using the book as your guide. Make sure you include the appropriate citation.

Week 1:

- Chapter one: What Is Literacy Coaching? (p. 9-14)
- Chapter two: How Does Coaching Lead to Change? (p. 16-27)

Week 2:

- Chapter three: How Do I Influence Teachers? (p. 28-29)
- Chapter four: How Do I Begin My Work as a Literacy Coach (p. 43-53)

Week 3:

- Chapter five: How Can I Communicate Well? (p. 54-65)
- Chapter six: How Do I Facilitate Coaching Conversations? (p. 67-80)
Week 4:

Chapter seven: What is Unique About Working With Teams? (p. 90-99)

Chapter eight: How Do I Deal With Difficult Situations: (p. 103-115)

Week 5:

Chapter nine: What Do I Do When the Coaching Program Focuses on Initiatives? (p. 116-129)

Chapter ten: How Do I Survive This Job? (p. 130-133)

Week 6:

Conclusion: What Do Literacy Coaches Do? What Don’t They Do? (adapted from Follow-Up
APPENDIX R

Coaching Conversations Record Template

Fill out this coach-teacher confidential conversation record at each meeting. Make sure you provide the teacher with a copy.

Teacher:
Coach:
Grade/Subject Area:
Date:
Topic/Problem:
Information about the topic/problem:
What else about the topic/problem:
Tell me more:
Strategy Use Goal:
  Which strategy?
  What text?
Brainstormed options for meeting the goal:
  Possible Activities:
  Possible Adjustments:

Actions to be taken:
Evaluation:
  If the Goal is met, this will be seen/heard:
Next meeting date and time:

Focus of the next meeting:

To do before then:

Adapted from Toll, 2014, The literacy coach’s survival guide: Essential questions and practical answers (2nd ed.) p. 82-83.
## APPENDIX S

### RCSI Coaches Question Stem Resource

Add to this shared document of question starters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Good for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversation opener</td>
<td>This is what I heard you say…. Is that accurate?</td>
<td>Affirming, clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging deep into a problem or situation</td>
<td>What does it look like when...</td>
<td>Getting a clearer picture of a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring Solution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What else</td>
<td>Tell me more about that...</td>
<td>Extending conversation for more detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection after strategy implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Toll, 2006).
APPENDIX T

Demonstration Lesson Planner

Teacher’s Name:

Class Name:

Teacher’s Goal:

Date of conversation of goal design:

Objective of lesson:

Strategy to Use:

Complex Text and pages:

Background information about the class:

Pre-demonstration meeting notes and reflections:

What questions will you ask the teacher to help reveal thinking?

Post-demonstration meeting notes and reflections:

What questions will you ask the teacher to extend the conversation?
APPENDIX U
Pre- and Post RCSI Assessment Data

* Required

1. How many students did you assess? *

2. How many students scored a 1? *

3. How many students scored a 2? *

4. How many students scored a 3? *

5. How many students scored a 4? *

6. How many students did not complete the assignment or scored a zero? *

Adapted from J. Josephs, personal communication, October 16, 2020.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.
APPENDIX V

RCSI Professional Development Pillars

Systematic professional development program

Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction in the content area classroom. Research based evidence for the need of and life-time implication for the student

Effective RCSI:
1. Declarative, procedural, conditional knowledge
2. Direct and explicit strategy instruction
3. Scope and sequence

Complex text use in the classroom

Coherent, ongoing, long-term professional development. School wide, collaborative, coordinated.

Hillcrest, D., 2020