



**POPEY** 

Provincial Outreach Program

for the Early Years

[www.popey.ca](http://www.popey.ca)

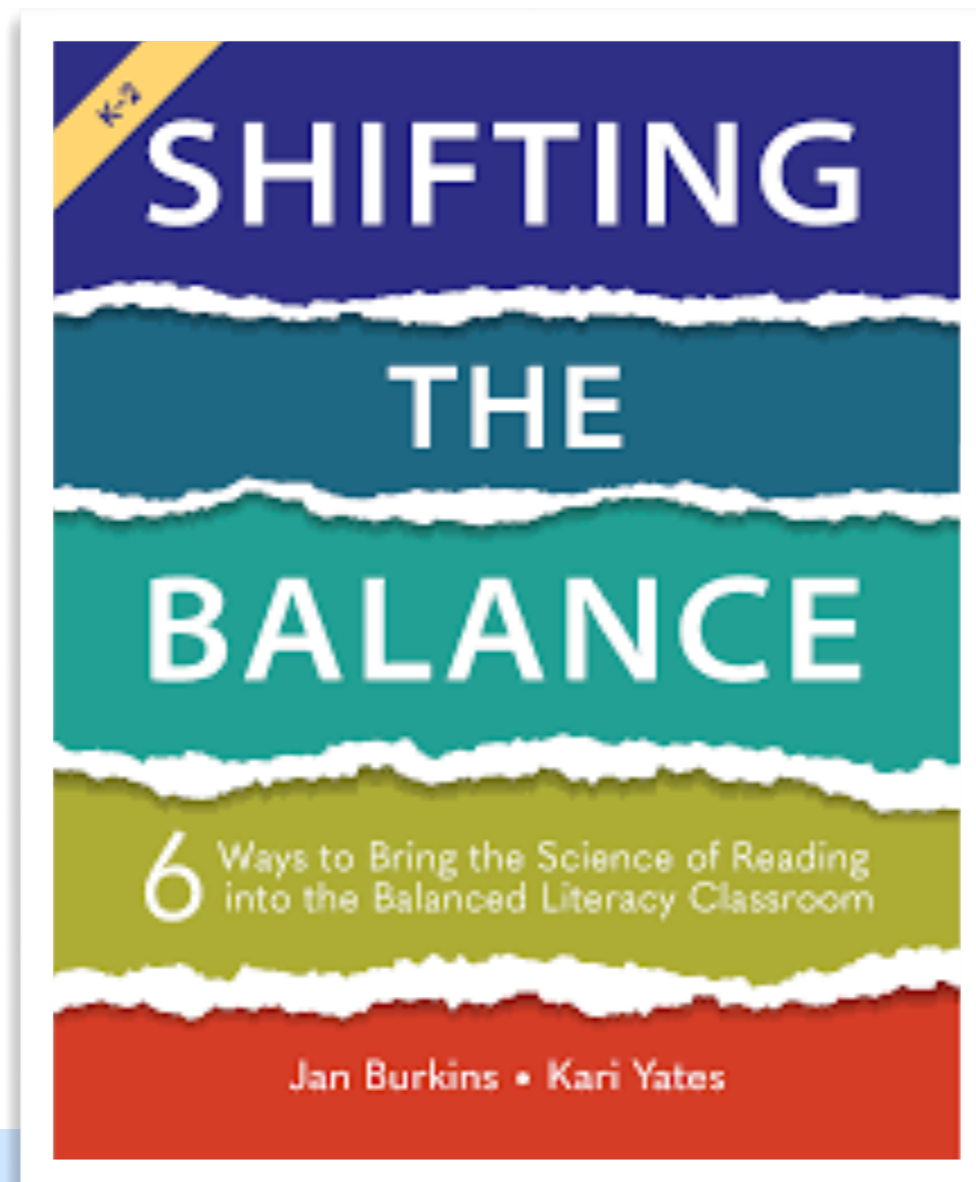
# *Shifting the Balance: Language Comprehension*

*Presenter:*

*Jen Kelly*

*Today we are exploring how we can...*

- \* support students' emergent language skills using research-based practices from the book, *Shifting the Balance*

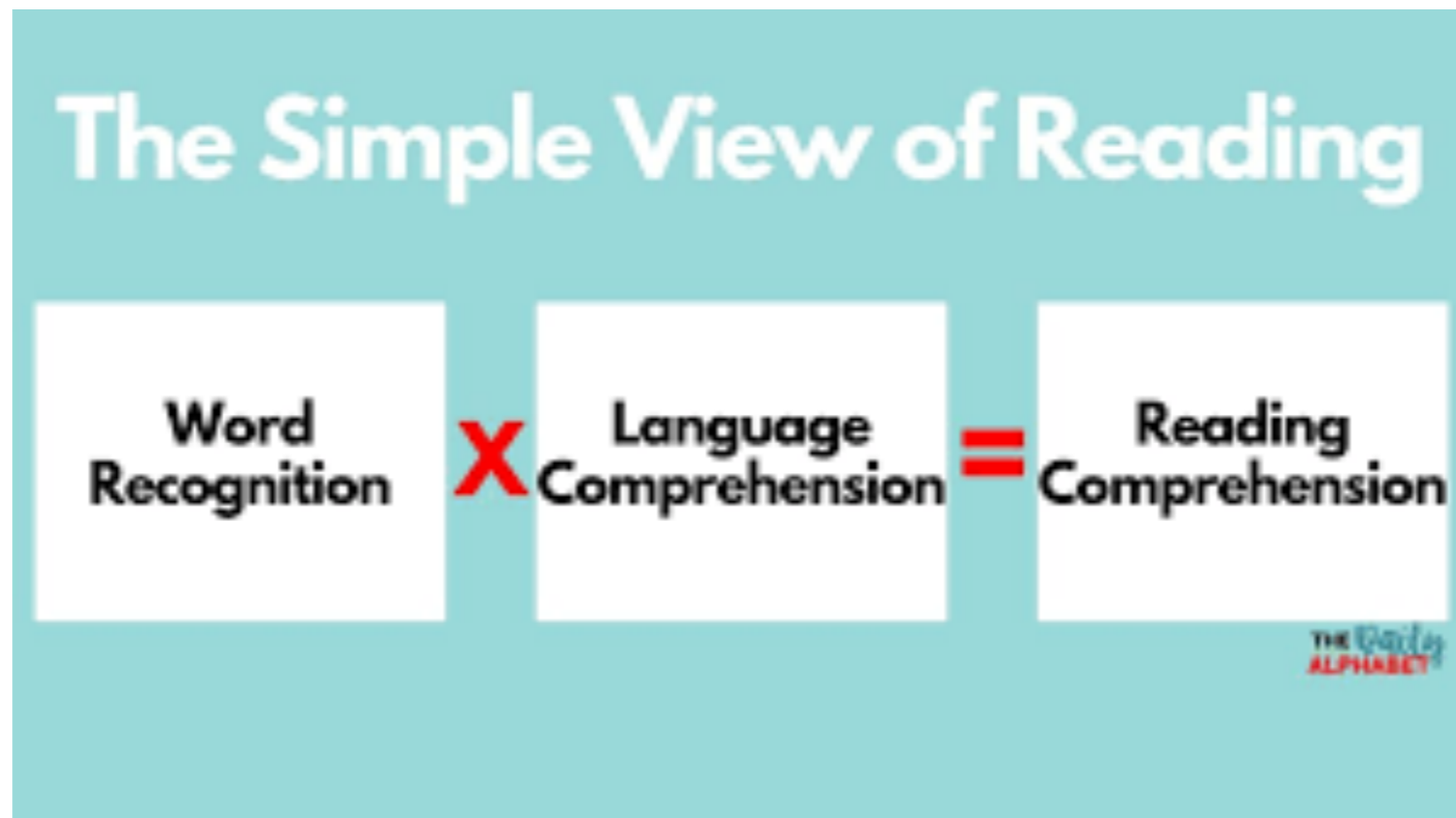


## Rethinking How Reading Comprehension Begins

- ★ By listening comprehension, we are not referring to how well children follow directions or to how well they can sit for us to offer long explanations. We are referring, instead, to their capacity to understand spoken language. This capacity develops through conversation, through hearing and sharing personal stories, and through interactions with rich texts.
- ★ Listening comprehension—which is built through language interaction—is, after all, an essential precondition of reading comprehension.

# *The Simple View of Reading*

Tunmer and Gough, 1986

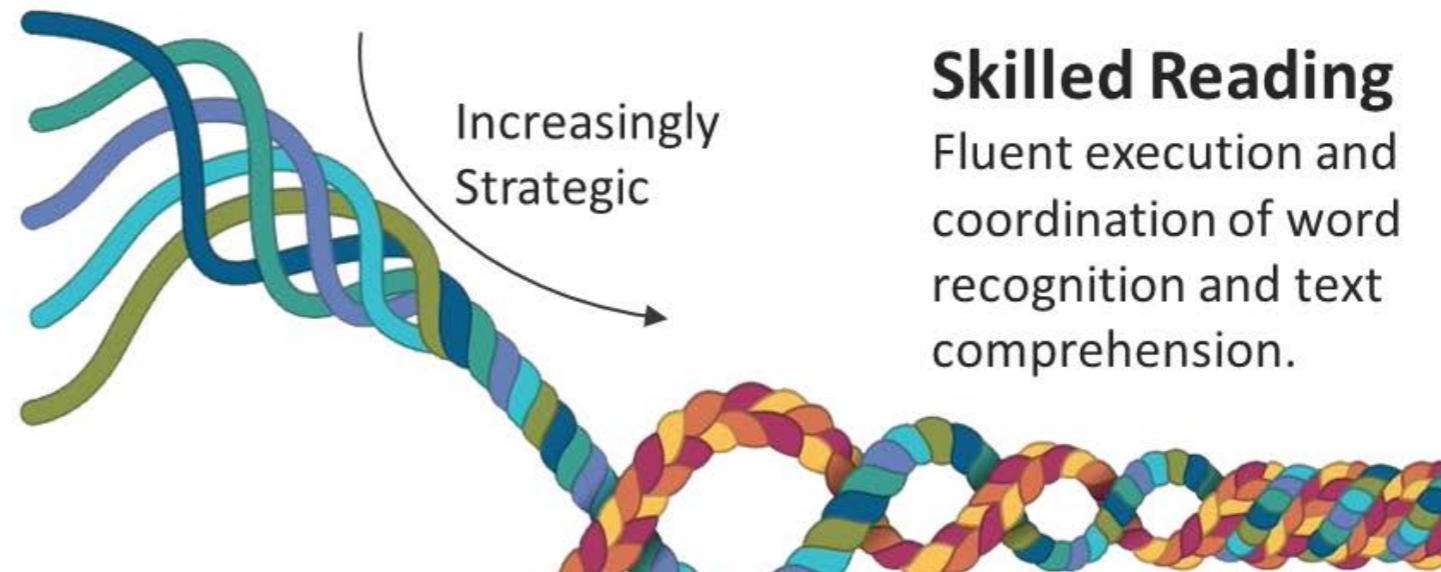


# Scarborough's Reading Rope

Language comprehension skills are a critical thread for reading success

## Language Comprehension

- Background Knowledge
- Vocabulary Knowledge
- Language Structures
- Verbal Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge



## Skilled Reading

Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

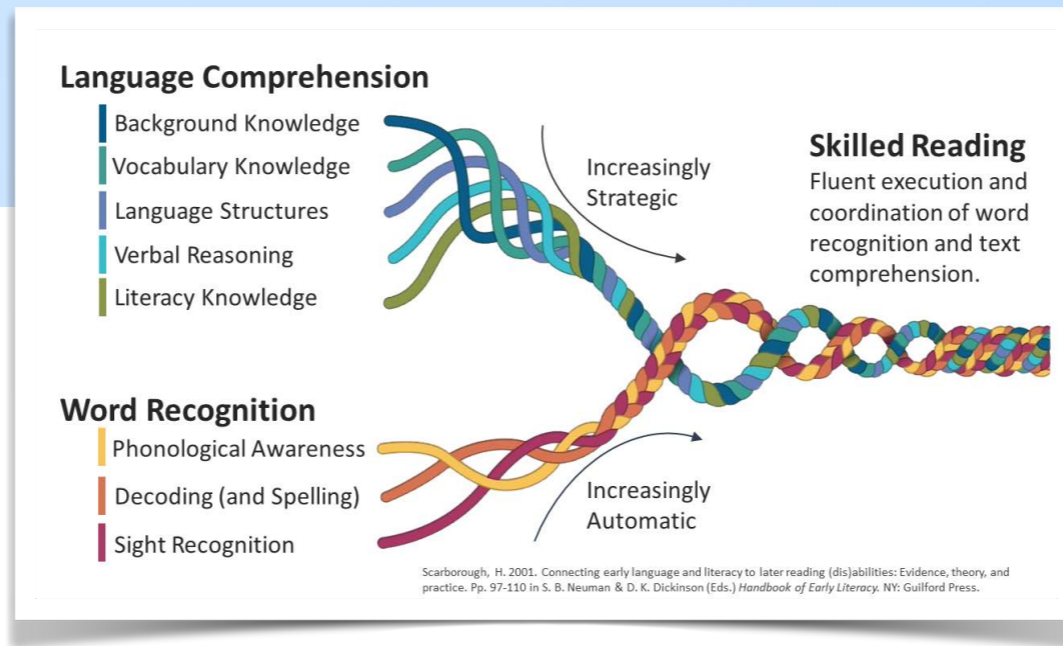
## Word Recognition

- Phonological Awareness
- Decoding (and Spelling)
- Sight Recognition



Scarborough, H. 2001. Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. Pp. 97-110 in S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.) *Handbook of Early Literacy*. NY: Guilford Press.



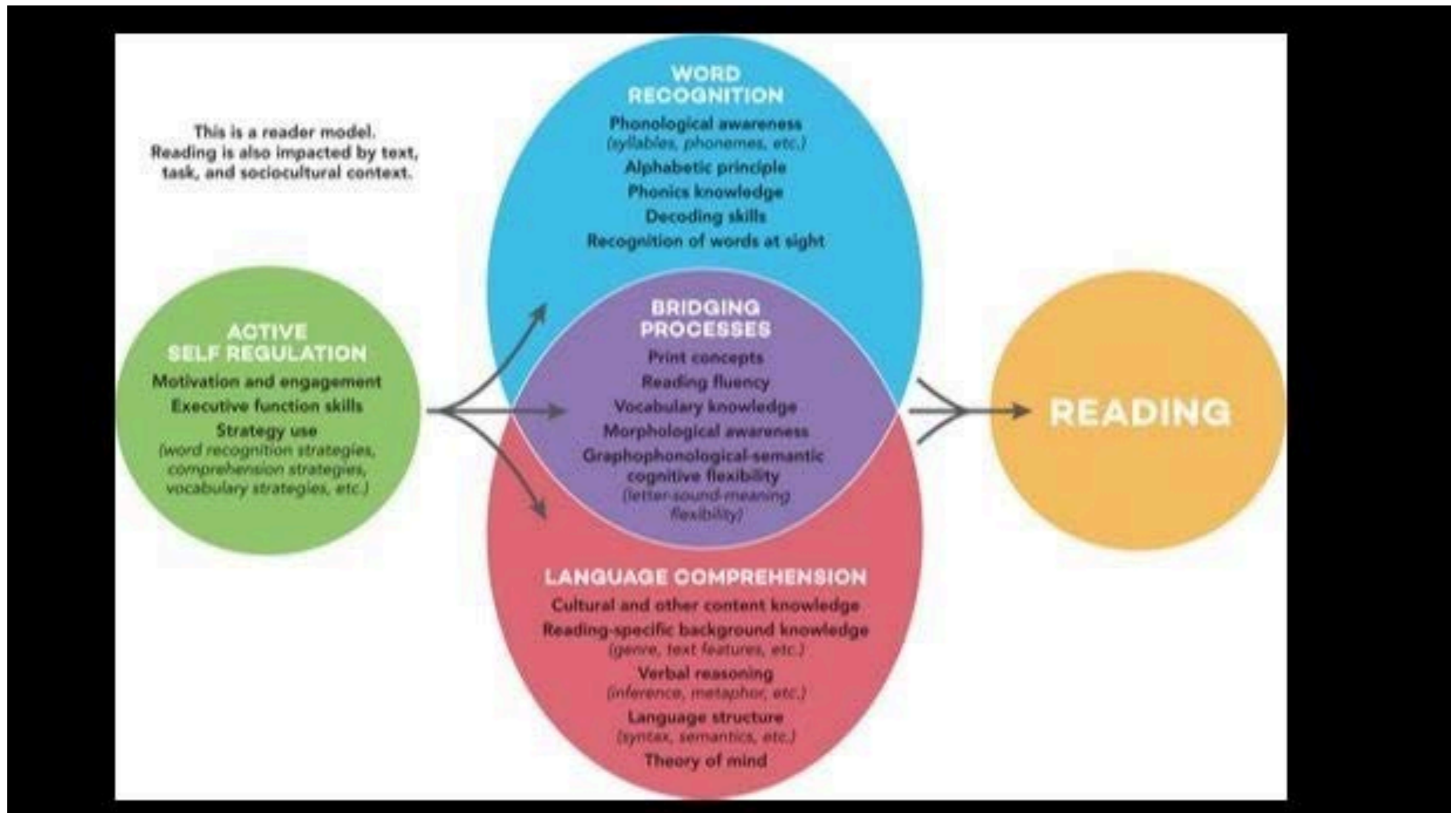


“Being strong on the lower strands affords more opportunities to acquire knowledge of the upper strands and being strong on the upper strands has been shown to enable faster and more accurate decoding of unfamiliar words.

Therefore, if any of the strands gets frayed, it can hold back development of the other strands and by extension can eventually weaken the entire rope.”

# The Active View of Reading

Nell Duke and Kelly Cartwright



# Why is talk so important?

- ✓ Talk provides a window into student thinking
- ✓ Talk supports robust learning by boosting memory, providing richer associations, and supporting language development
- ✓ Talk supports deeper reasoning and encourages students to reason with evidence
- ✓ Talk primes students in scientific thinking
- ✓ Talk supports the development of social skills and encourages risk-taking with huge payoffs for learning

---

If they can't say it, they won't be able to read or write it. - Marie Clay

# *The Importance of Language Comprehension*



Our full capacity to  
understand the language  
all around us

# Language Comprehension

- \* Reading comprehension begins with spoken language
- \* To comprehend a text, enough words on the page have to activate language we already have

“We are natural born sense-makers”  
-Burkins



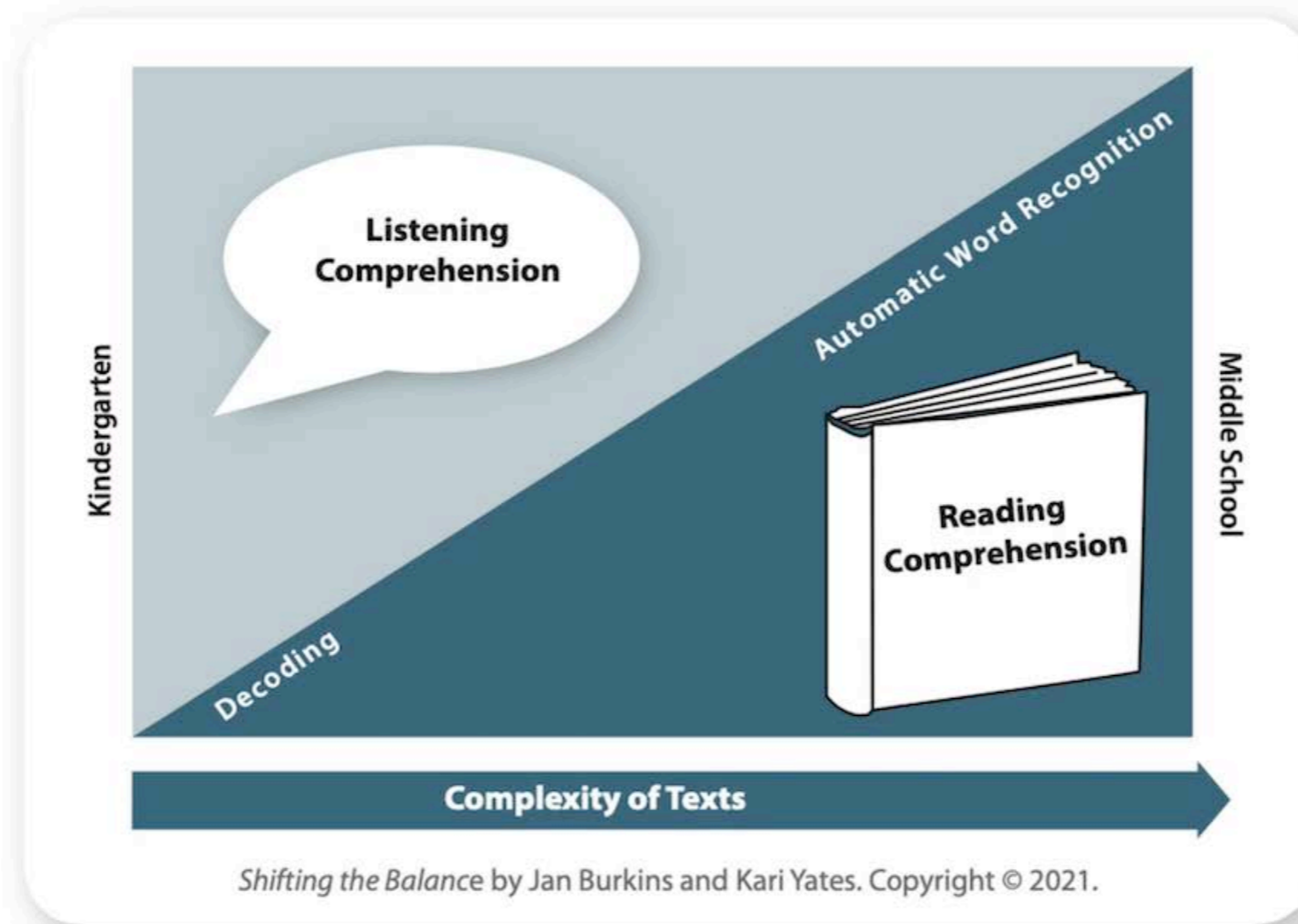
# Language Comprehension

“Comprehension problems – which tend to be linked to limited language skills – often stay hidden until later grades (Nation et al. 2004) when the complexity of the text begins to exceed the limits of the child’s listening comprehension.”



# Listening Comprehension & Reading Comprehension

Access to Complex Language and Opportunities for Deep Thinking



Conversations with our students are an investment in their future reading comprehension

# *Supporting Oral Language & Oral Comprehension*

Time spent on this is a **huge** investment in future reading comprehension.

Strong oral language can reduce the need for comprehension strategy instruction, so intentionally supporting oral language development in the classroom is important.

It is important that beginning readers have access to complex ideas through read-aloud, conversation, content area instruction, and other language-developing opportunities.

**Shift:**

Reading comprehension is fundamentally the same work as listening comprehension.

Reading comprehension actually involves translating the words on the page into spoken language and “listening to them,” either by saying them aloud or saying them in our heads.

So if children cannot understand enough of the words and sentences when they are spoken, they will not comprehend the same words and sentences when they read them.

This means that opportunities to grow **oral language** – including vocabulary, background knowledge, sentence structure, and more – actually develop the comprehension mechanisms of **reading**.

## *Shift:*

Treat oral language development as an essential ingredient for comprehension.

Gather what you need to support language comprehension:

### ✓ **Read-aloud texts**

- ★ choose texts that will stretch listening comprehension by providing exposure to rich ideas, wide vocabulary, background knowledge, and novel language structures

### ✓ **Text sets**

- ★ built around a particular topic/theme, representing a range of text complexity. These will provide multiple entry points for students to build background knowledge, acquire language structures, and expand vocabulary around key topics

### ✓ **A collection of high-leverage instructional routines**

- ★ for building and extending both intentional and incidental classroom conversations – including reading aloud and using interesting words

## *Shift:*

Treat oral language development as an essential ingredient for comprehension.

### High-leverage instructional routines for language development:

- ✓ Make space for planned and incidental conversation
- ✓ Ask quality questions
- ✓ Provide wait time
- ✓ Repeat and expand
- ✓ Use interesting words
- ✓ Read aloud
- ✓ Teach with text sets to build content area knowledge

# High-Leverage Instructional Routines

Routine, Purpose, Examples –  
the What, the Why, the How

## ✓ Make space for planned and incidental conversation

- ★ Leverage conversation throughout the day and give children practice articulating ideas, listening, adding on, and asking relevant questions
- ★ Examples:
  - Lets talk about...
  - This is so interesting. Let's talk more about it...
  - Tell us about what just happened.
  - Talk to your partner about...
  - Who wants to add on to \_\_\_\_?

## ✓ Ask quality questions

- ★ To ensure students have opportunities for higher-level thinking, such as describing, explaining, comparing, evaluating, and inferring.
- ★ Examples:
  - What do you think about...?
  - How are \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ alike or different?
  - Why do you think that is more important?
  - Explain what really happened.

# High-Leverage Instructional Routines

Routine, Purpose, Examples –  
the What, the Why, the How

## ✓ Provide wait time

- ★ To give children the time they need to process information, formulate thoughts, and organize their language to express their ideas
- ★ Examples:
  - *After posing a question, wait.*
  - (Silence)
  - I'll give you some time to think about what you want to say
  - Let your partner think.

## ✓ Repeat and expand

- ★ To reinforce, extend, and clarify student language
- ★ Examples:
  - *Wow, that's so interesting. You had...*
  - *So you...*
  - *I don't understand. Tell me more about...*

# High-Leverage Instructional Routines

## Routine, Purpose, Examples – the What, the Why, the How

### ✓ Use interesting words

- ★ To teach new vocabulary and encourage students to use it, and to teach children to notice and acquire new words
- ★ Examples:
  - Let's all be on the lookout for new and interesting words
  - Let's take some time to learn this powerful word.
  - Let's see if we can all find ways to use this word today.

### ✓ Read aloud

- ★ To introduce students to new vocabulary, to build background knowledge, to expose children to language and text structures, and to provide children with joyful experiences with books.
- ★ Examples:
  - Let's read this book to see what we can learn about ...
  - Let's read this sentence again and try to figure out what it means.
  - Why did you love this story?
  - What's working talking more about?
  - Tell the story to your partner in your own words.

# High-Leverage Instructional Routines

Routine, Purpose, Examples –  
the What, the Why, the How

- ✓ **Teach with text sets to build content area knowledge**
  - ★ To use text sets across read-aloud and shared, guided, and independent reading – including that in content area instruction – to build background knowledge and interest in a topic
  - ★ Examples:
    - Today we're going to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_ by reading \_\_\_\_\_.
    - Let's start a basket for all the books we are collecting about \_\_\_\_\_.
    - You'll be excited to find some of the same words and ideas from the other book(s) we've read. Tell us about the connections you find.

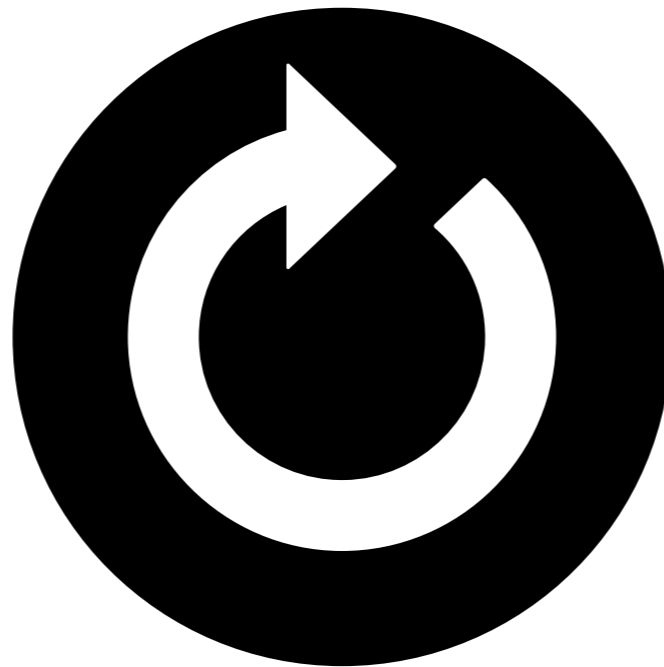
# Skilled Comprehenders Use These Strategies

- \* connecting to prior knowledge – **schemas**
- \* self-questioning – ask themselves **questions** about the text
  - an essential component of **planning** to understand a text
- \* predicting – using **prior knowledge** and **clues** from text to make **hypotheses** about the text **content**
- \* using text **structure** – organize text information to make **meaning**
- \* visualizing – mental **imagery** to remember information from texts
- \* making inferences – **integrate** bits of info and fill in the **gaps**
- \* summarizing – **prioritize** the importance of info to get the ‘**gist**’
  - this requires **complex working memory** and **cognitive flexibility**

*We can explicitly model these comprehension skills and engage students in conversations that allow them to practice language comprehension.*

# Circle Story

*Let's make sense of our literacy instruction  
through participating in a Circle Story...*



# Sources

\*All resources available at [padlet.com/POPEY](https://padlet.com/POPEY)

## Info Links

[Talk Science Primer by Sarah Michaels & Cathy O'Connor: TERC \(Technical Education Research Centers\)](#)

[The Simple View of Reading – Gough](#)

[The Active View of Reading – Duke & Cartwright](#)

## Books & Presentations

Shifting the Balance – Burkins & Yates

Executive Skills & Reading Comprehension – Cartwright

Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities – Scarborough

## Videos

[Tik Tok – Aldie's Emotions](#)

[Tik Tok – Aldie's Mom Reflects](#)

[Video: Q&A with Hollis Scarborough – YouTube](#)

[YouTube: Three Year Old Telling a Story](#)



## Contact Us!



Lisa Thomas

[lisa@popey.ca](mailto:lisa@popey.ca)



Jen Kelly

[jen@popey.ca](mailto:jen@popey.ca)



**POPEY** 

Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years

[www.popey.ca](http://www.popey.ca)