

WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SAYING . . .

With over 20 years of teaching experience, Christina Nosek wholeheartedly embraces the joys and challenges of nurturing a classroom full of agentive readers. From the first chapter to the last, she offers practical, easy-to-implement strategies, honoring teachers at various entry points in their journey as workshop practitioners. From simple “language swaps” to shifting paradigms in literacy assessment, this professional book is sure to propel leaders, teachers, and learners across the country forward.

Tenille Shade
Literacy Coach

Christina Nosek’s wealth of experience shines through on every page of this must-read text that offers a fresh perspective on teaching reading. This one-stop resource synthesizes current research and translates it into practical advice and actionable guidance for teachers of *all* experience levels. The framework Christina outlines and explains not only promotes greater academic success but also ensures that students develop and maintain strong reading identities. With this book in hand, there’s no doubt teachers will feel prepared to share the power and joy of reading!

Pamela Koutrakos
Instructional Coach and Author of *Word Study That Sticks*,
The Word Study That Sticks Companion, and *Mentor Texts That Multitask*

Wow! Literacy educators are so fortunate to have this newest book by Christina Nosek out in the world! It is an incredible addition to the resources we have, and one that is unique in what it offers readers. I love that it can be read cover to cover or used when thinking about a specific piece of your literacy teaching. Christina responds to each question with depth and intentionality. Embedded throughout are messages about the language we use as teachers and how we can be more thoughtful with our language in order to support student agency. There is something for every literacy teacher to grow his or her practice, no matter the experience level.

Franki Sibberson
Author of *Beyond Leveled Books*

For educators who are not blessed with a professional mentor leading them down a “path of continual learning and growth,” Christina Nosek becomes our mentor in a no-nonsense guide about what matters most. With each chapter wisely positioned around essential questions, Nosek’s reflections offer a gift of words and wisdom between two covers. I wish I’d had this book as a new teacher; but as a veteran teacher, I am again inspired to stay on course.

Mary Howard
Author, *Good to Great Teaching: Focusing on the Literacy Work That Matters*

Wherever you are on your journey to becoming the most effective reading teacher for the students in your care, Christina is a mentor you can count on. With the clarity and authenticity that comes from spending her days with learners, she has thoughtfully condensed a vast topic into six manageable chapters. Filled with her research-guided wisdom and resources for further study, she answers questions, big and small, about creating a thriving, equitable reading community. I wish I had Christina's book my first year of teaching, and I know that I will be turning to it often as I continue to learn about our most important work—nurturing joyful, passionate, critical readers.

Maria Walther

Author of *The Ramped-Up Read Aloud* and *Shake Up Shared Reading*

Finally! This book fills the needs of *all* reading teachers no matter what level they are at: preservice, early in their career, switching to a different grade, or those with decades of experience. It's ideal for a book study where teachers plan to review their practices with a "guide on the side," as Christina uses snippets from the classroom, research, and practical applications to answer your reading questions that cover the "why this matters" as well. Teaching reading today requires knowledge and skill; this text will give you the confidence and competence to increase your own expertise and knowledge. Ask a question, search the table of contents, and get started reading! You decide whether you read the book from cover to cover or seek out specific questions or chapters for starting points!

Fran McVeigh

Literacy Coach, Co-Moderator for #G2Great Chat, and
Academic Coordinator and Adjunct Faculty for Morningside University

Ten years ago we had Donalyn Miller's *The Book Whisperer* to guide us on how to awaken the reader in every child. Now, we have Christina Nosek's *Answers to Your Biggest Questions About Teaching Elementary Reading*, which reminds us of the important concepts that help to create a reading community that will support every student to see themselves as readers! As a building administrator, I want every teacher to have this book as we begin each school year to cultivate those reader leaders in our building! This will be a must-have resource for all teachers!

Lisa Castillo Guajardo

Principal of Mitchell Elementary, Houston, TX

Teaching reading is not a simple task; it's more like keeping the plates spinning in unison in an acrobatic performance. It requires that educators understand reading theory and models that support growing readers, have time to practice and hone their skills, and receive guidance on how to keep all the parts going. In *Answers to Your Biggest Questions About Teaching Elementary Reading*, Christina Nosek has provided up-to-date best practices that we should see in all classrooms. This comprehensive volume delivers on content while simultaneously coaching teachers to make effective decisions throughout the reading block. What I especially appreciate about this text is the focus on young (K–5) readers, placing them at the center of planning and teaching.

Sandy Brumbaum

Literacy Coach and Reading Recovery Teacher Leader

This extraordinary and teacher-friendly book is filled with rich, relevant, and practical guidance for anyone who teaches reading! Whether you are a new teacher or have been teaching for many years, the questions (and answers) that Christina poses in this book will help you create a reading classroom where all students can become joyfully literate humans.

Kelly Boswell

Educational Consultant and Author of *Every Kid a Writer*

From those percolating questions that keep you up at night to the curriculum presentations that require a justification of why the teaching of reading matters, this book is the compass that will steer you north. Validating, and centered on foundational understanding—in particular to the most vulnerable of children—this book holds social justice, agency, and lifelong learning at its core. A must-read for all teachers, time and time again! Christina Nosek makes the information digestible, relevant, and accessible to teachers and everyone who understands that the teaching and learning of reading goes way beyond the words on a page.

Lucía Rocha-Nestler

Senior Staff Developer and Literacy Consultant,
The Language and Literacy Collaborative

Imagine getting to be a fly on the wall of an exemplary teacher's classroom, watching reading instruction. Now imagine that you have a guidebook in front of you explaining why and how everything is happening, like the key on a map. This author is that teacher, and this book is that guide. *Answers to Your Biggest Questions About Teaching Elementary Reading* shares the whys and hows of great reading instruction in a classroom with clear examples and ample resources for those ready to dig deeper. It is an excellent resource for both new and veteran teachers wanting to make the best use of instructional time to help grow readers who will read for life, not just 20 minutes.

Jacqui Cebrian

Elementary Reading Specialist and Community Advocate for Book Access

Teaching young students reading is not easy, but Christina Nosek's important new book is here to help lay the foundation for educators. One of the critical components to powerful reading instruction is the *why* behind minilessons, strategies, conferences, small groups—what holds it all up? Christina walks readers through the why, the how, and offers a multitude of ideas to keep your reading instruction fresh, engaging, and student-focused. A book for reading teachers, yes, but also anyone working with teachers of elementary reading. I felt like Christina was sitting next to me, chatting and helping nudge my thinking about reading forward, and I'm excited for educators to get their hands on this valuable resource.

Matt Halpern

Education Consultant, Speaker, and Author

Christina Nosek is an educator with a passion for reflection, collaboration, and professional growth. Key questions anchor this book, and they are the questions that teachers of all experience levels grapple with, wonder about, and work to answer. With spotlights on community building, instruction, assessment, curriculum, and student agency, Christina weaves questions and answers with experience-based key commitments and practical strategies that will build your understanding of complex skills, your resources, and your confidence.

Melanie Meehan

Author of *Answers to Your Biggest Questions About Teaching Elementary Writing* and *Every Child Can Write*, co-author of *The Responsive Writing Teacher*

Christina Nosek expertly outlines and deeply explores holistic reading instruction that leads to curious, empowered, self-directed readers. If you want to learn practices that motivate and engage students in reading, structures that provide practical differentiation, instructional methods that work with a variety of classroom groupings, and assessments that serve your students and promote growth, then *Answers to Your Biggest Questions About Teaching Elementary Reading* is for you! I learned from this book, as well as found validation and inspiration in its chapters. I know you will too.

Mark Weakland

Literacy Coach, Consultant, and Author of *How to Prevent Reading Difficulties*

Thanks to Christina Nosek, my students will have a mentor literacy teacher with them at all times! She expertly guides us through the steps to create a robust community of lifelong readers, something our world desperately needs.

Susie Rolander

Bank Street College of Education

ANSWERS *to Your*

BIGGEST QUESTIONS *About*

TEACHING
ELEMENTARY
READING

This is for you, Dad.
Our talks and walks are my favorite thing.

FIVE to
THRIVE

ANSWERS *to Your*

BIGGEST QUESTIONS *About*

TEACHING
ELEMENTARY
READING

Christina Nosek

CORWIN



For information:

Corwin
A SAGE Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
(800) 233-9936
www.corwin.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London, EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative
Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications
Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
18 Cross Street #10-10/11/12
China Square Central
Singapore 048423

President: Mike Soules
Vice President and Editorial Director:
Monica Eckman
Executive Editor: Tori Mello Bachman
Content Development Editor:
Sharon Wu
Editorial Assistants: Nancy Chung
and Nyle De Leon
Production Editor: Tori Mirsadjadi
Copy Editor: Amy Hanquist Harris
Typesetter: Integra
Proofreader: Talia Greenberg
Indexer: Maria Sosnowski
Cover Designer: Gail Buschman
Marketing Manager: Margaret O'Connor

Copyright © 2022 by Corwin Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted by U.S. copyright law, no part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

When forms and sample documents appearing in this work are intended for reproduction, they will be marked as such. Reproduction of their use is authorized for educational use by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial or nonprofit entities that have purchased the book.

All third-party trademarks referenced or depicted herein are included solely for the purpose of illustration and are the property of their respective owners. Reference to these trademarks in no way indicates any relationship with, or endorsement by, the trademark owner.

Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Nosek, Christina, author.
Title: Answers to your biggest questions about teaching elementary reading : five to thrive / Christina Nosek.
Description: Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin, 2022. | Series: Corwin literacy Identifiers: LCCN 2021059386 | ISBN 9781071858011 (paperback) | ISBN 9781071876954 (epub) | ISBN 9781071876947 (epub) | ISBN 9781071876930 (adobe pdf)
Subjects: LCSH: Reading (Elementary) | Reading teachers--In-service training. Classification: LCC LB1573 .N668 2022 | DDC 372.4--dc23/eng/20220106
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021059386>

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

22 23 24 25 26 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

DISCLAIMER: This book may direct you to access third-party content via web links, QR codes, or other scannable technologies, which are provided for your reference by the author(s). Corwin makes no guarantee that such third-party content will be available for your use and encourages you to review the terms and conditions of such third-party content. Corwin takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for your use of any third-party content, nor does Corwin approve, sponsor, endorse, verify, or certify such third-party content.

Note From the Publisher: The author has provided video and web content throughout the book that is available to you through QR (quick response) codes. To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	xii
About the Author	xiv
Introduction	1

1 HOW DO I BUILD AND MAINTAIN A READING COMMUNITY? **8**

What Is My Own Identity as a Reader?	10
How Do I Get to Know My Students as Readers?	13
How Can I Support My Students in Building and Celebrating Their Identities as Readers?	16
How Can I Make Reading Relevant for My Students?	18
How Do I Start to Build and Maintain a Reading Community?	21
How Can I Set Up Conditions to Foster Authentic Student Talk and Collaboration?	25
How Do I Involve Families and Caregivers in Their Child's Reading Life?	29
How Can I Continually Work to Make My Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Relevant?	32

2 HOW DO I STRUCTURE, ORGANIZE, AND PLAN MY READING INSTRUCTION? **36**

What Are the Habits of Engaged and Joyful Readers?	38
What Are the Skills of Proficient Reading?	40
What Are Some Things to Keep in Mind About the Similarities and Differences in Fiction and Nonfiction Reading?	43
What Should a Reading-Centered Classroom Look and Sound Like?	45
How Do I Build and Organize a Classroom Library?	46
How Do I Support Students in Choosing Books?	49
How Will I Organize My Classroom Time to Ensure Students Are Reading Enough?	55
What Materials Will Students Need, and How Will They Be Stored?	57
How Do I Plan the Scope and Sequence of What to Teach for the Year?	60

How Will I Know What to Teach Next?	62
How Can I Plan to Support Students With Specialized Learning Plans?	64
How Can I Plan to Support All of the Different Needs of the Readers in My Class?	66

3 WHAT ARE THE KEY INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES TO KNOW AND USE? **68**

What Are the Different Choices and Models I Have for Instruction?	70
What Are the Different Components of Balanced Literacy in Reading Instruction?	73
How Should I Balance Whole-Group Instruction With Small-Group and Individualized Instruction?	76
How Do I Deliver a Lesson to the Whole Class?	78
How Do I Make the Most of an Interactive Read Aloud?	80
How Do I Make the Most of Student Independent Reading Time?	83
What Are Some Different Structures for Small-Group Learning?	87
How Does a Reading Conference Go?	90
How Can I Incorporate Reading Throughout the Entire School Day?	93
What Are Some Special Considerations in the K–1 Classroom?	96

4 HOW DO I USE ASSESSMENT IN THE SERVICE OF STUDENTS? **102**

What Is Formative Assessment in Reading Instruction?	104
How Do I Approach Assessment From an Asset-Based Perspective?	107
What Are Some Common Formative Assessment Methods?	109
How Do I Keep Track of My Students' Different Strengths and Next Steps as Readers?	111
How Will I Know What to Assess?	115
How Will I Know When to Expect Mastery?	120
How Can I Assess if Students Are Understanding While I'm Teaching?	122
What Do I Do if I Feel a Student May Need Extra Support Outside of Classroom Time?	124

5 HOW DO I SHIFT AGENCY TO STUDENTS, ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING THEM AS READERS? **126**

What Is Student Agency in Reading?	128
What Role Does Engagement Play in Agency?	129
What Are Different Ways I Can Provide Choice to Students?	132
What Are Some Ways I Can Encourage Student Feedback and Decision-Making?	135

What Are Some High-Impact Conditions and Activities That Promote Student Agency?	137
How Can I Support Students in Reflecting on Their Strengths and Next Steps as Readers?	141
What Are Some Ways I Can Support Students' Authentic Response to Reading?	143

6 WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE? **146**

Appendix	149
Appendix A. Grades K–1 Reading Interest Survey and Teacher Directions	150
Appendix B. Grades 2–3 Reading Interest Survey	152
Appendix C. Grades 4–5 Reading Interest Survey	153
Appendix D. Teacher Observation Survey	154
Appendix E. Online Sources for Learning About and Staying Informed on Children's Literature	156
Appendix F. Common Questions and Concerns From Parents and Caregivers About Reading	157
Appendix G. Weekly Reading Instructional Plan	158
Appendix H: Class List With Checkboxes	160
Appendix I: Reading Three Goals Formative Assessment Form	161
Appendix J: Individual Student Assessment Form	162
References	163
Index	166



Visit the companion website at
resources.corwin.com/answerelementaryreading
 for downloadable resources and video clips.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is only possible because of all of the wise and forward-thinking literacy educators on whose shoulders I stand—starting with my own literacy methods professor at San Diego State University, Dr. Marva Cappello, and my mentor during my first year as a teacher, Midge Fuller, to the many others who have shaped my teaching practice since. From the workshops and professional development sessions led by the many thought leaders at The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, to the detailed information about texts and readers in the writings of Fountas & Pinnell and the continued work of the many educators and researchers whose work I follow on a regular basis (many of which are listed as Great Resources throughout this book)—thank you.

On a more personal-professional note: To my #G2Great mentors, Writing Zone friends, friends from NCTE, Doing the Work group, and all others who push me and value equity in literacy education as much as I do, I am deeply grateful for the continued fuel you provide that keeps this fire lit. I may not see you or even get to chat with you often, but your impact and influence are always with me on this journey. Tori, a huge *thank you* to you and Corwin for believing in me. I thoroughly enjoyed our 5 a.m. conversations and this entire process.

On a very personal-professional note: An enormous thank you goes to my former partner in literacy coaching—reading specialist extraordinaire, Angie Lew. Angie, thank you for taking the time to read and offer feedback on multiple paragraphs and sections of this book as it developed. A huge thank you also goes to my teaching colleagues who helped in this process: Haley Harrier, Ann Kwolek, Stephanie Han, and of course my #DreamTeam, Katie and Laura. Jim, Jenn, Katie K., and Molly—I am always grateful for our continued teacher-talk and non-teacher-talk over good food and drink! Teaching is an amazing calling. It's made even better when I get to do it every single day with past and present colleagues who I also get to call my dearest friends.

On a strictly personal note: Alternating drafting, revising, biking, yoga, strength training, and drafting/revising again on the regular was necessary in this writing process. A massive message of gratitude goes out to my most turned-to Peloton instructors: Christine, Denis, Sam, Leeanne, Ben, Jess K., Kristin, Chelsea, and Matty. I would be a very different person and writer without your consistent words and encouragement on the bike and mat. What you do makes a difference. And thank you to Robin in my Friday 6 a.m. Peloton riders group for lending me your pedals when one of mine broke! You saved my ability to write for a couple of critical weeks there! *I am* a teacher-writer. *I can* concurrently write and teach. *I will* make a difference. *I do* this because I'm called to—and I love it! #WriterChris13

Finally, to my family and friends near and far, thank you for your support and encouragement while I completely buried myself in writing this book on top of working as a full-time classroom teacher. It's now time to relax and enjoy! Let's grab

a glass of California white or Pennsylvania red, toast around the fire, cheer on our SJ Sharks, chase Michelin stars, enjoy great conversation at early dinners, linger in museums, belt it out at concerts, hike out in nature, go on that trip, FaceTime across the ocean, frolic in the tulips, walk the dog (especially my favorite boy Prince), solve the world's problems, and just spend more time together. I love you all.

PUBLISHER'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Corwin gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following reviewers:

Connie Obrochta
Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, Reading Interventionist

Viviana Tamas
AIS Reading Teacher/Literacy Coach K–5

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Christina Nosek is a passionate classroom teacher of 20 years and a literacy education staff developer in her time away from the classroom. She equally loves teaching children and supporting teachers in developing their classroom reading and writing communities. Her past roles include reading specialist and literacy coach. When she is not working in education, she's enjoying life in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is her second book for teachers.



While organizing and cleaning out my new classroom prior to the start of my first year of teaching in 2002, I uncovered a familiar book. It was white with a thick blue border, a photograph of a cocker spaniel on the cover. Memories flooded back. I immediately recognized the book as one of the reading textbooks from my elementary school days in the 1980s. I couldn't believe the book was still around.

I remembered holding that book as a 9-year-old student, pretending to follow along as other kids in class read aloud from it. Rather than actually following along as the teacher expected, I counted the paragraphs to figure out which one would be mine to read aloud. I practiced my paragraph over and over again in my head as my classmates read aloud. I remembered my classmate Barry, who stuttered as he read, and the laughter from a couple of other kids in class. When I think about it, I still intensely feel anger toward the teacher for putting Barry through that. However, as a teacher myself now, I wonder if my teacher back then knew the pain she was causing—perhaps she was just following directions from above or teaching the way she learned in school because she just never learned otherwise.

A few weeks later, as I flipped through my school's more current basal reader, I compared the two books side by side. Indeed, not much had changed in the basal reader world since the 1980s. Both books featured a collection of stories with comprehension questions after each one. Most teachers at my school at the time did not strictly follow the basal program page by page. Rather, they referred to it now and again as a few good stories were included, but they primarily relied on their classroom libraries, the school bookroom, and collaboration with each other to develop their reading instructional plans. They knew that encouraging choice in reading and building high-interest classroom libraries were the cornerstones of building a classroom reading community.

That first year, I was mentored by an incredible teacher in the classroom next door: Midge Fuller. Midge, a veteran teacher of over 30 years at the time, supported my literacy instruction by watching me teach and providing feedback. She often helped me practice and refine my guided reading instruction and excitedly shared new titles in children's literature.

In the winter of that year, Midge brought me along to a professional development session presented by Katie Wood Ray at a local college. I remember being mesmerized by Ray's words and passion for teaching. On the car ride home, after watching the session in a large theater filled with other like-minded educators, Midge talked about the reciprocity of reading and writing, named a few other literacy thought leaders I should read, and emphasized that learning as a teacher never stops. It's a careerlong endeavor—a magical one that I was fortunate to embark upon! That moment was a turning point for me. I knew my path forward in education was to continually learn everything I could about literacy teaching and learning.

I wish all new teachers had someone like Midge to lead them onto their path of continual learning and growth. Although I only worked with Midge for one year, her impact remains with me. Midge's example and mentorship as a literacy teacher guided me toward my master's degree in equity in literacy education. It led me to my ongoing membership in the National Council of Teachers of English, and most importantly, it keeps me continually reading professional texts and refining my practice to this day. If you do not have a teaching mentor like Midge to give you a starting point on your literacy learning journey—or if you are striving to be like Midge by supporting the work of continual teacher growth—this book is for you. If you do have a Midge in your life, perhaps you're picking up this book to continue to refine your practice.

WHY DO WE READ?

The first time I walked into Midge's third-grade classroom to observe her teach, it was reading time. Lamps around the room created a sense of warmth. Instrumental music played at low volume; the soft light and the background music fostered a sense of calm. Midge sat at her horseshoe-shaped table with four students, surrounded by books and notebooks. Three of the readers and Midge were all intently listening to one student's thoughts on a strategy he just tried. A few students were huddled together in a corner, all holding a copy of the same book while deep in discussion. Others were sitting at their desks or in large bean bag chairs, independently reading from their book boxes. I saw students laughing, deeply engaging in conversation, jotting notes, reading with eyes glued to the page, and Midge not leading but *facilitating* a reading strategy group. All at the same time in this one reading session, there was *reading to learn*, *reading to be entertained*, and *reading to grow* taking place.

The reasons for reading in school should mirror the reasons we read outside of school.

In the world outside of school, people read for many reasons, including to do these things:

- ☺ Find understanding
- ☺ Acquire information
- ☺ Challenge thinking
- ☺ Learn how to do something
- ☺ Relax and let go
- ☺ Laugh and enjoy
- ☺ Socialize and connect

Midge provided students opportunities to read for different purposes in her classroom. Unfortunately, and for various reasons, reading inside of school often does not resemble the reading that we do in the world outside of the school building. In order to set students up for success, the world inside of school should resemble what they will be asked to do outside school. As in Midge's classroom, students need to have opportunities to laugh, learn, and grow during their reading time.

HOW IS TEACHING READING DIFFERENT TODAY?

Reading instruction has evolved in exciting ways over time. In addition to understanding the important roles of word recognition, fluency, and comprehension in the process of reading, teachers of reading now also know the impact of many other factors in reading instruction and learning, thanks to the research and teaching of many scholars and educators in the field. Teachers of reading now know the following facts:

- High volume of reading (minutes read plus words read) plays a critical role in a child's reading growth, including
 - Vocabulary acquisition (Krashen, 1989; Nagy et al., 1987; Nation & Coady, 1988)
 - Building background knowledge (McVee et al., 2005; Ozuru et al., 2009)
 - Increasing achievement (Allen et al., 2015; Allington, 2012; Anderson et al., 1988)
- A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. Reading teachers now strive for equity and responsive instruction. At the classroom level, equity refers to every student having the right to be taught in a way that serves their own individual strengths and needs as opposed to every student being given the same thing. We can achieve equity, or start to work toward it, when we teach responsively following the strengths that already exist in each of our students (Muhammad, 2020).
- Early reading foundational skills of listening comprehension and decoding (see *The Simple View of Reading*, Gough & Tunmer, 1986) play a key role in a child's reading development. While this has been known for decades, recently there has been a greater focus in ensuring all readers receive the needed instruction in these critical foundational skills.
- In addition to decoding and listening comprehension, many other factors play a role to encompass the active view of reading. One of these factors is active self-regulation, which includes motivation, engagement, and executive function skills (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).
- Skilled literacy educators now seek to help all students engage in productive struggle to grow. The focus on back-to-basics instruction instead of embracing intellectual grapple and curiosity has hurt many students, especially students learning English as an additional language. The work of Zaretta Hammond (2015) tells us that a culturally responsive pedagogy includes ensuring that all of our students receive instruction to meet and appropriately challenge their intellectuality.
- Our society has access to more information—and *misinformation*—than we ever have before due to widespread and constant online access. An important part of reading instruction now includes spending instructional

time to support students in critically evaluating and reading sources and information, both online and off.

- ☺ Finally, the way literacy educators view texts children read is vastly different than in years past. In fact, the way text is defined is even different! Text can include a traditional book, comic book, graphic text, online article, video, images, audiobooks and files, and more! The one commonality among all of these types of text is that students need to learn how to decipher, understand, and even evaluate them.

WHAT IF I'M TEACHING A VIRTUAL, HYBRID, OR OTHER NONTRADITIONAL MODEL?

During the first 10 months of the Covid-19 pandemic, I heard many people repeat the phrase, “Good teaching is good teaching no matter which model you use.” As someone who has now been a classroom teacher in a prepandemic traditional setting, full virtual setting, hybrid setting (students in-person and at a distance concurrently), and again in a full-class/in-person setting with masking precautions in place, I can tell you it’s true. Good teaching is good teaching—but making it happen is no easy feat when quick, unexpected adjustments need to be made. However, putting three guiding questions at the forefront of your decision-making will help you make the most of teaching in any setting.

1 *What constitutes good teaching?*

Good teaching always involves following the lead of your students before all else. In times of uncertainty, keep your students’ strengths and needs at the forefront of your decision-making. Also keep in mind that those strengths and needs at any given time may change. Good teaching also accounts for social-emotional considerations. When social-emotional needs are met, students are more likely to engage in learning. Good teaching also prioritizes essentials. For example, when my school quickly switched to a virtual model of teaching in March of 2020, I simply did not have enough time in the allotted teaching day to do everything I once did in the classroom. Yet I did make time for the essentials I knew were important for my students’ reading development: to read aloud and implement supported independent reading every day.

2 *What do my students need right now?*

As a teacher of reading, and of all subjects in elementary school, keep in mind that you are tasked with teaching the children you serve, not necessarily teaching every page of the curriculum. Sometimes, adjustments need to be made. Oftentimes, the social-emotional needs of your students will outweigh the academic requirements of the curriculum. Always asking what it is that your students need right now will help guide you in making those needed adjustments when you’re called to make a change in setting or teaching model.

3 *Considering the time constraints I have, what are some things I can let go of?*

When asked how I fit it all in, my response is the same: I don’t fit it all in. As a teacher, you will constantly consider what you value and then make time for those things accordingly. If something is not valuable, consider this as your permission to let it go. To identify if something is valuable or not, I recommend evaluating the task or activity with the following two questions:

- Are my students learning something valuable that transfers to their independent reading?
- Do my students find joy or fulfillment in this activity?

If the answer is *no* to either one of these questions, the task or activity at hand might not be the best use of your reading instructional time. It's true that, as a teacher, you will make time for what you value most. While you will not be able to decide everything, especially teaching in times of turmoil or unrest, you do have control and decision-making power over quite a bit.

HOW SHOULD I USE THIS BOOK?

I hope you turn to this book in the way that I turned to Midge so many years ago. Every time I had a burning question or needed support in my practice, I sought out Midge. Oftentimes, Midge gave me some information to get me going but then recommended a book I should read to learn more, a teaching method I should try, or a classroom language choice that was new to me. Midge gave me enough to get me started and then guided me toward learning more on my own. This is exactly what I hope this book will do for you and the teachers you work with.

This book is *not* a curriculum, a sequence of lessons, or a how-to. Rather, it is a collection of the most important concepts you need to know with answered questions that comprise the foundation of the reading classroom. Reading this book will not give you a script to follow but rather a starting point if you're new to teaching reading. It may also provide philosophies and methodologies for you to consider if you are a veteran whose goal is to focus on authentic reading instruction in your classroom practice.

You will find helpful features throughout, such as practical teaching tips, important principles to keep in mind, terms to know, great resources to help you learn more, photos from actual classrooms, and QR codes that will take you to short, explanatory videos. Keep in mind, this book was written during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. All photos of students are from classrooms where masking procedures were in place. But the masking didn't stop staff and students from the important work of teaching and learning!

Short stories from my own classroom and classrooms of my current and former colleagues help illustrate certain points throughout the book—to show you where theory and research actually fit into real classroom practice.

If you are a new teacher, this book might be a reminder of practices you learned in your teacher education program. It might also give you some new things to consider. It is likely that much of the information in the book will be new to you. I recommend picking one area to start as your focus. Perhaps you will want to focus on building a reading community first. In that case, start with Chapter 1. If you feel you need a refresher on key instructional principles, you might start with Chapter 3. Allow your needs at this moment in time to be your guide. Throughout the book, I will guide you to other resources and thought leaders in reading education to learn more. This book will be your jumping-off point, not your end point.

If you are a veteran teacher, this book might be a reminder of best practices and why you do what you do for your readers in the classroom. It might also introduce

you to a few new ideas and methods in reading instruction. After all—as Midge instilled in me so many years ago—as teachers, we never stop learning.

If you are a literacy coach, this book might be used as a reference for your own work or as a book study to lead with the teachers you serve. It will especially help you serve the new teachers you work with.

If you are an administrator, this book will help you know what good reading instruction looks like. Please use it to positively support and encourage your teachers in creating thriving and equitable reading communities and in planning and delivering effective reading instruction.

If you are a teacher educator, this book is a good starting point for your preservice teachers to start thinking about five guiding questions from which to ground their reading practice in their future classrooms and their current student teaching assignments. Additionally, this book is a collection of accessible starting points for new or soon-to-be-new teachers.

If you are a preservice teacher, thank you for joining our profession! You are our future. Perhaps you are even one of our future literacy leaders! This book is your starting point to learning all about how to best create a reading classroom to serve the strengths and needs of your future students. In the pages ahead, you will start to learn the basics of reading instruction and where to go next. I am so glad that you are here for the journey!

WHAT ARE THE FIVE THINGS I NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW?

Each of the chapters ahead focuses on one big guiding question that you need to know right now to get you started. There are then seven to 12 subquestions answered under the guiding questions.

Five Guiding Questions

- 1 How Do I Build and Maintain a Reading Community?
- 2 How Do I Structure, Organize, and Plan My Reading Instruction?
- 3 What Are the Key Instructional Principles to Know and Use?
- 4 How Do I Use Assessment in the Service of Students?
- 5 How Do I Shift Agency to Students, Engaging and Empowering Them as Readers?

You might decide to read the chapters in the order presented, or you might decide to read what you need in the moment and come back as necessary.

The most important thing you need to know right now is that you are on a continual learning journey to be the kind of reading teacher who values your own learning because you know your students' learning depends on it. This book might be your first stop or perhaps your 10th stop on that path. It certainly is not your last. By picking up this book, you already know and value your own growth as a reading teacher. As Midge instilled in me so many years ago, learning is a careerlong endeavor, and it's a magical one!

