

Leveraging Teacher Emotions for Student Success

A Recommendation for Upper-Grade Teachers with Readers Who Need Support

Brooklin Trover

National Director, Content and Implementation





About the Author

Brooklin Trover

Brooklin Trover is a national director of content and implementation at Curriculum Associates. Before joining Curriculum Associates, Brooklin embraced *i-Ready* as a teacher and district leader. Her career began with 13 years as an elementary and middle school teacher. Her passion for working with fellow educators in support of student growth led to a five-year school district leadership position coaching and providing professional development.

Brooklin's passion for humanizing data-driven instruction at the district level has inspired teachers and led to gains for students. She is thrilled to continue her work with *i-Ready* on a national level. Brooklin holds an M.A. in Policy Studies of Language, Literacy, and Culture from San Diego State University and an M.S. in Reading from California State University, Fullerton.

Break the Cycle

It is a repeating cycle of emotions that flows through every upper-grade teacher a few times a year as they work with a reader who needs support. First comes the frustration that a student has made it to their grade level and doesn't have the foundations needed for on-grade level reading. Then comes empathy for the student and their previous teachers because teaching reading is a hugely difficult task, especially as students fall behind their peers. And sadly, the last feeling is defeat, as they believe anything they could possibly try will just be too little too late at this point.

Frustration, empathy, defeat.

The time has come to change that cycle of emotions for upper-grade educators. The recent push of well-researched work on the Science of Reading is the perfect catalyst for that change.

Frustration Becomes Motivation

Although the work of Philip Gough and William Tunmer (1986) on the Simple View of Reading has been continually supported by other researchers over the past 36 years, many educators are unfamiliar with the formula. Often, upper-grade teachers do not receive professional development in reading instruction because they are not teaching a foundational grade level. This oversight can begin to be remedied with a brief examination of the main drivers in the Simple View of Reading.

Figure 1: The Simple View of Reading



Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7(1), 6–10.

Figure 1 illustrates that strong reading comprehension cannot take place unless *both* word recognition skills and language comprehension skills are strong. What is astounding is the process is not additive, where a slight increase in either area will result in just a slightly bigger total. Instead, this view uses a multiplier, and the reading comprehension product has the potential to be a much larger total! The belief by some upper-grade educators that foundational skills instruction for older students is just too little too late is simply incorrect.

Consider these mathematical representations as a change in foundational skills (see Table 1). In these scenarios, strong skills are represented by the number 10 to showcase how the multiplicative effect impacts reading comprehension. Even a little increase in one foundational skill can have a large impact, especially if the other variable is already strong.

Table 1: Mathematical Representations of the Simple View of Reading

Student Skill Description	*D x LC = RC	Comprehension Effect Description
A student has low decoding skills and strong language comprehension skills.	1 x 10 = 10	Any number times 1 can only be as big as its own value. There is no increase in reading comprehension.
A student has a slight increase in decoding skills and strong language comprehension skills.	3 x 10 = 30	A large increase in comprehension occurs when the weak variable increases and the other is strong.
A student has minimal decoding skills and minimal language comprehension skills.	5 x 5 = 25	Comprehension is lower when both variables are minimal—both need to be strong for strong reading comprehension.
A student has a large increase in decoding skills and language comprehension skills.	9 x 8 = 72	Comprehension grows tremendously as both variables increase in strength.

*D = Decoding, LC = Language Comprehension, RC = Reading Comprehension

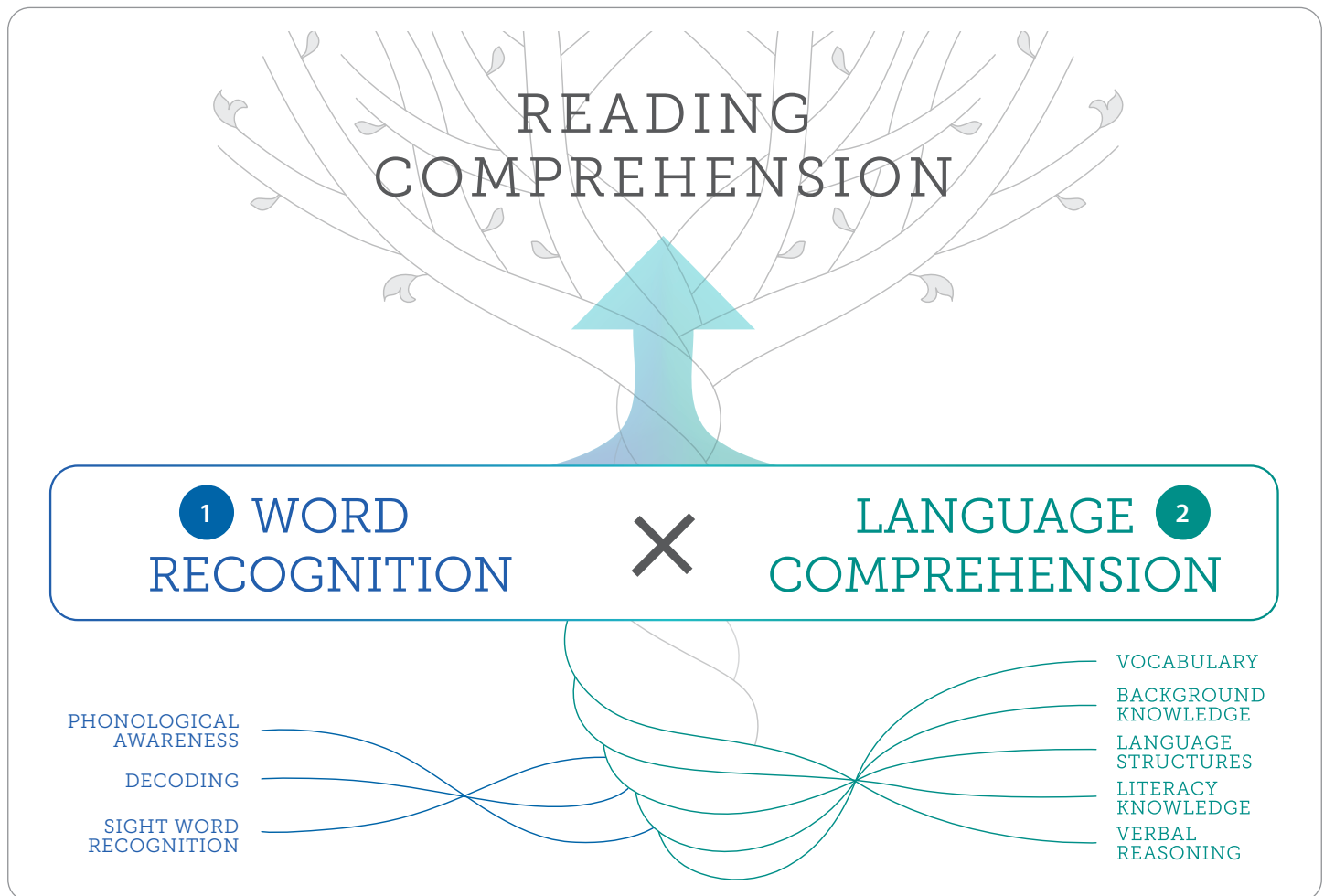
The Science of Reading research that is not experienced by many upper-grade educators in their pre-service training or professional development is the exact research that can change a feeling of frustration into a feeling of motivation. Teachers can see their impact is possible. It is very motivating to know they are able to positively contribute to the reading comprehension ability of a student who needs support regardless of the grade they teach.

Empathy Becomes Clarity

Newly motivated with knowledge gained from the Simple View of Reading, teachers can move beyond feeling empathetic for these students and should seek clarity for instruction. Teachers must uncover what is hindering students from on-grade level reading. However, we are once again plagued with the challenge that upper-grade teachers may not have the experience or resources to quickly gain this clarity. They cannot hold this weight entirely on their own. Everyone deserves a good coach, and good coaching makes all the difference when change in performance is the goal. Even the greatest performers and athletes have coaches who measure a range of factors and give feedback so the artist or athlete can make proper adjustments and move forward more successfully. An upper-grade teacher must have this same level of clarity, illuminating strengths and areas of need for their student who needs support to plan targeted reading instruction. What is impeding their comprehension must be systematically determined.

A Pathway to Reading Fluency

Foundational skills assessments will direct teachers to detailed information within both components of reading.



- 1 First, there's decoding, which is defined by Wesley Hoover and Gough (1990) as "efficient word recognition." Skills within word recognition include phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, sound-spelling correspondences, and sight recognition. These skills become increasingly automatic as a student becomes more proficient with them (Scarborough, 2001). Simple oral response assessments can pinpoint exactly which strands of word recognition are already strong and which strands are weaker for a student.
- 2 Language comprehension is equally important to measure through assessment. These skills include background knowledge, vocabulary, language structure, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. Each of these skills is increasingly strategic, and students develop an understanding of when to apply them to the text they are reading (Scarborough, 2001). Although these skills may be more familiar to upper-grade teachers than the word recognition skills, intervention requires very targeted instruction, and therefore, assessment is still vital for teacher clarity.

Empathy must be a short-lived emotion for upper-grade teachers when they encounter a reader needing support. Shifting that feeling to clarity gained through detailed assessments allows teachers to remove the impediments blocking on-grade level reading for these students.

Defeat Becomes Conviction

A motivated teacher with all the clarity needed to understand their students may still feel frozen, incapable, or ill-equipped for actual intervention instruction. They've made it all this way but feel the fingers of defeat gripping them as they absorb the weight of rigorous grade-level demands and a pace that must be kept. It is in this moment—that feeling of defeat—that conviction must rise from within. We work in a human industry with life-changing results.

It takes conviction to begin, but that first step must be taken. Do something. Get started. Stay convicted to the truth that there is time to change this student's life, because one action will lead to another, and another, and another. And soon, the defeat will feel distant and unacceptable as intervention instruction is taken on with conviction.

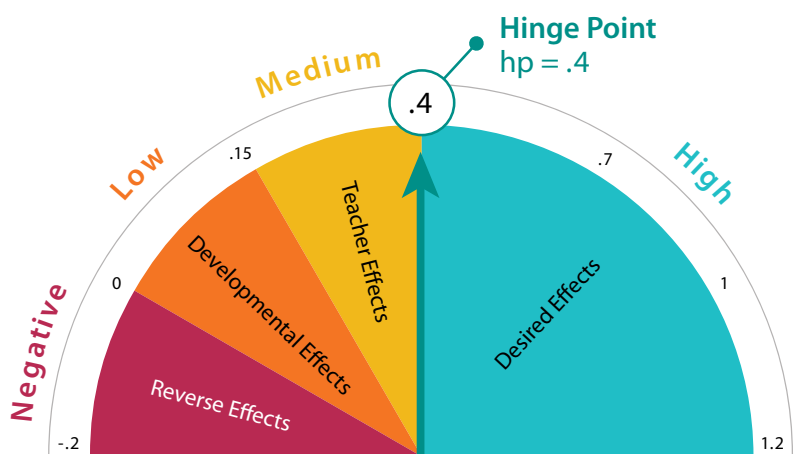
It takes conviction to begin, but that first step must be taken. Do something. Get started. Stay convicted to the truth that there is time to change this student's life, because one action will lead to another, and another, and another. And soon, the defeat will feel distant and unacceptable as intervention instruction is taken on with conviction.

A perfect starting point is communicating with the student. This is a human-to-human relationship after all, not simply a one-sided instructional push by the teacher. Upper-grade students who need support know they are not as good a reader as their more proficient peers, but they don't often know why, and they rarely have anyone talk directly with them about it. At this juncture, it is vital to include the student in what needs to be addressed, why it needs to be addressed, and how it will be addressed so the intervention can be successful.

Setting learning goals is the exact action needed to raise the conviction in the teacher as well as investment from the student. Open communication about the goal should involve teacher and student input so the goal is appropriately challenging and offers clear intentions connected to building foundational skills. Teachers should explain to the student what they learned about them from their assessments, including the strengths of what the student can already do well and what the next steps are. Consider showing the student the diagram of the Simple View of Reading and talk with them about how the multiplier will boost their comprehension tremendously. Explain that the reason they need to build these foundational skills is so their reading comprehension can grow as quickly as possible.

It is this specificity and commitment to a learning goal that combine for a very strong and positive effect on student growth. John Hattie (2008) established that an influence has a desired effect when it reaches a .4 on his Barometer of Influence. It is at this hinge point that an influence will have a "greater-than-average influence" on achievement.

Figure 2: Barometer of Influence



Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning*. Routledge.

Table 2 lists four influences that have a high effect size directly related to the aforementioned goal-setting conversation. When combined, these influences have an even stronger impact, and this upper-grade student who needs support will have a change in their trajectory not only as a reader but also as a student overall.

The feeling of defeat will no longer linger with upper-grade teachers once they take that first step with their students. Everything begins with a single step. When taken with conviction, surely more will quickly follow. It is the nature of improvement and change—we must simply be convicted enough to begin.

Leveraging Teacher Emotions for Student Success

Teaching is an emotional craft. The investment teachers have in their students year after year comes from this bottomless well of passion and dedication. It is understandable that sometimes a cycle of emotions can take teachers into a place of stagnation. This often occurs when upper-grade teachers encounter readers who need support. Unfortunately, that stagnancy does not stop at the teacher level and is passed along to the student. Little growth occurs, and the student’s reading comprehension stays below grade level.

A change in emotions is recommended for these upper-grade teachers stuck in this cycle. By shifting frustration to motivation, empathy to clarity, and defeat to conviction, teachers can leverage their emotions to help lift up the readers needing support and change the trajectory of their lives.

Table 2: Strategies Emphasizing Learning Intentions

Strategy	Effect Size
Learning goals versus no goals	.68
Appropriately challenging goals	.59
Clear goal intentions	.48
Goal commitment	.40

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning*. Routledge.



References

- Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education, 7*(1), 6–10.
- Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning*. Routledge.
- Hoover, W. A., & Gough, P. B. (1990). The simple view of reading. *Reading and writing: An interdisciplinary journal, 2*, 127–160.
- Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy* (pp. 97–110). Guilford Press.

.....

To see how other educators are maximizing their
i-Ready experience, follow us on social media!



@MyiReady



Curriculum Associates



@CurriculumAssoc



iReady

.....

Curriculum Associates is a rapidly growing education company committed to making classrooms better places for teachers and students. We believe that all children have the chance to succeed, and our research-based, award-winning products, including *i-Ready, Ready*®, *i-Ready Classroom Mathematics*, BRIGANCE®, and other programs, provide teachers and administrators with flexible resources that deliver meaningful assessments and data-driven, differentiated instruction for children.

To learn more, please visit CurriculumAssociates.com.



36968.0