Reading Next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy

Scobre Press Corporation (www.scobre.com)

The fifteen key elements highlighted by the 2004 Reading Next report parallel national and state standards being assessed on high stakes reading exams.

Reading Next is a 2004 report to Carnegie Corporation of New York from the Alliance for Excellent Education, authored by Gina Biancarosa and Dr. Catherine Snow. It assesses the state of adolescent literacy and makes recommendations that address the primary challenges in the field. The report identifies fifteen key elements of effective adolescent literacy instruction and programs.

Correlation of the *Dream Series Reading Program* to the Reading Next Report

Fifteen Key Elements of Effective Adolescent Literacy Programs	Scobre Press *Dream Series Literacy Program* High-Interest Adolescent Books
1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction, which is instruction in the strategies and processes that proficient readers use to understand what they read, including summarizing, keeping track of one's own understanding, and a host of other practices. **Possible Approaches:** •*Comprehension strategies instruction,* which is instruction that explicitly gives students strategies that aid them in comprehending a wide variety of texts. •*Comprehension monitoring and metacognition instruction,* which is instruction that teaches students to become aware of how they understand while they read. •*Teacher modeling,* which involves the teacher reading texts aloud, making her own use of strategies and practices apparent to her students. •*Scaffolded instruction,* which involves teachers giving high	•*The Dream Series Reading Program* focuses on the teaching, modeling, and practice of *four critical reading comprehension strategies.* Using before, during, and after instructional sequences found within *The Dream Series Teacher's Resource Guide*, students are taught the principals of these strategies, as instructors model each strategy using textual and personal examples. Students are then provided with graphic organizers which provide them opportunities to **apply** these comprehension strategies and processes to high-interest text, relating what they are reading to what they know about the world. They are then given opportunities to write about, and discuss text. •The four strategies integrated throughout instruction are *1) Making Connections, 2) Visualization, 3) Making Predictions, and 4) Asking Questions.* These strategies are research-based processes that proficient readers use to comprehend text. •*Students will learn how to preview text before reading* is the outcome for the "Before Reading" instruction. •*Students will interact with the text as they read* is the outcome for the "During Reading" instruction. •*Students will extend and deepen their knowledge of learned strategies* is the outcome for the "After Reading" instruction. •*Graphic organizers* for each comprehension strategy are included in the *Teacher's Resource Guide.* •The intention and overall goal of instruction is that *students are effectively, and habitually, interacting with text*…resulting in a significant increase in student's level of comprehension. Furthermore,

support for students practicing new skills and then slowly decreasing that support to increase student ownership and self-sufficiency. •*Apprenticeship models,* which involve teachers engaging students in a content-centered learning relationship.	because *The Dream Series* books are high-interest, and written in the domain (their world and their language) of students, they are increasingly motivated to apply recently learned practices to text. ***Strategy 1—Making Connections*** Activating prior knowledge, also known as activating "schema," means that the reader is making a connection from the new to the known. This is important because research tells us that the only way to learn something new is to connect it to something known. By making connections to the text, they will be interacting with it on a personal level. ***Strategy 2—Visualization*** Students will bring their schema and the author's words together to form mental images. This is another way for the students to interact with the text and think while they read. ***Strategy 3—Making Predictions*** Proficient readers predict, or anticipate, what is going to happen as they read. They base their predictions on the information given and their own life experiences. By making predictions, a reader is constantly interacting with the text—proving or disproving his/her previous thoughts. ***Strategy 4—Asking Questions*** Questioning is the most fundamental quality of a human being. It is how we dispel confusion, make discoveries, and strengthen our abilities to analyze and come to reasonable conclusions. Proficient readers question the content, and the style and intent of the author as they read. Generating questions is one of the comprehension strategies that has the most impact on student retention and understanding.
2. Effective instructional principles embedded in content, including language arts teachers using content-area texts and content-area teachers providing instruction and practice in reading and writing skills specific to their subject area.	•Teachers explicitly apply the skills of teaching, modeling, and scaffolding the comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading. •The topics connect strongly to student lives and are integrated with learning in career education, social studies, health education, physical education, current affairs, and other areas such as student development, character education, and after-school programs. •Scobre Press books entice students to read with high-interest content. Each book is wrapped around the personal journeys of both fiction and nonfiction teenagers. These high-interest books attract and motivate students to read with greater involvement in the reading and in their life. Many students need books such as these to realize that they, too, can have a bright future. • Scobre's nonfiction books focus on teenagers pursuing careers in sports, technology, music, dance, medicine, law, etc… the books are wide-ranging in content, delving into Middle East Politics, bullying,

	scoliosis, civil war in Haiti, the history of dance, modern entrepreneurs, sports history, wind energy, farming practices, the evolution of technology, robotics, entertainment, anorexia, alcohol issues, divorce, etc…
	• Scobre's fiction books are novels based on the career dreams of fictional teenagers. The novels are rich in detail, and each is completely unique.
	•For some, these books may be the first time that they will be willing to read with interest and motivation, therefore being willing/able to read other materials including other content-area texts. Scobre books light a spark for striving readers by facilitating a fun, successful experience with a book, thus motivating them to continue reading.
	•The books model kids writing about their life, thoughts, and something at which they excel…something that motivate students to write, real writing, for themselves.
	•Integrated use of graphic organizers, guided discussion, and writing activities before, during, and after the reading.
	•Students employ their recently learned reading strategy on fiction and nonfiction text, each of which is composed of stories about real kids who are chasing down their dreams.
	•The books embed reading comprehension and writing activities relating to each chapter of the book within the books themselves. In the Teacher's Guide, the short answer questions are answered for the teacher. The essay questions are personal writing activities which relate text to one's life experiences. These activities help students develop their writing skills and become accustomed to interacting with text.
3. Motivation and self-directed learning, which includes building motivation to read and learn and providing students with the instruction and supports needed for independent learning tasks they will face after graduation.	•The books provide student choices that will, for many students, reawaken student engagement in reading, learning, and their lives.
	•Differentiated Instruction facilitates high-interest reading. Each high-interest Scobre book is available on two distinct reading levels— one on level, and one more accessible to striving readers. This means that students can **choose** the book they want to read, rather than being assigned a based book on their reading level. Once they have chosen a book, the teacher can suggest the appropriate level of that book for that student. The facilitation of choice by the reader is powerfully motivational and truly defines "high-interest" as a personal decision. High-interest is only high-interest if *I choose*.
	•Promotes relevancy in what students read and learn. Allows teachers to "tune in" to their students' lives in order to understand what they find relevant and why. Scobre books are written by a team of young authors, who tap into the culturally relevant topics and issues modern students relate to. Scobre books refer specifically to the Xbox games they play, the MTV shows they watch, the musicians,

	athletes and movies stars they admire, and the issues they face every day.
	• *"Supported Independent Reading"* (a term coined by Scobre Press) is a hybrid of guided reading and independent reading. The reading comprehension strategies act as a scaffold for students as they become more independent in their reading.
	• *"Supported Independent Reading"* is a bridge, which leads students toward the ultimate goal: effective and habitual independent interaction with text, leading to better comprehension.
4. Text-based collaborative learning, which involves students interacting with one another around a variety of texts.	• Strongly supports small-group discussion and literature circles with the use of relevant topics of interest to students.
	• Scobre Press books provide differentiated instruction and texts by having two different reading levels; one on level and one that is on a level more accessible to struggling readers.
	• Students can focus on the same comprehension strategy, but be reading a different Scobre book. This differentiated instruction allows students to share information about the book they read— interacting on a variety of texts.
	• The activities in the *Teacher's Resource Guide* are performed before, during, and after reading. Most of the after reading exercises are performed in groups, with students sharing information from their independent reading.
	• Teachers provide scaffolding for engagement at varying ability levels in the class that promotes better oral language, comprehension, and meaning by student discussion done in small groups.
	• Nonfiction texts are composed of stories about real kids who are chasing down their dreams.
5. Strategic tutoring, which provides students with intense individualized reading, writing, and content instruction as needed.	• The comprehension strategies are focused and provide student guided help throughout all texts and materials.
	• Scobre Press books provide differentiated instruction and texts by having two different reading levels; one on level and one that is on a level more accessible to struggling readers.
	• The explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies teach students "how to learn." Students can easily transfer these strategies to other content-area texts and genres.
	• Teaching, modeling, and engaging students to use explicit comprehension strategies is done in a scaffolded fashion before, during, and after the reading which empower adolescents to use these comprehension strategies independently.
	• The after reading activities in the *Teacher's Resource Guide* involve the instructor and other classmates, who both help to scaffold a reader through the process of comprehension. This support is provided after

	reading so that a student can read, comprehend text, and write about text, individually, prior to working with his/her classmates or with the help of an instructor.
	•During "Supported Independent Reading," students will write an essay relating to chapters they read. These essay questions are built into every Scobre book.
6. Diverse texts, which are texts at a variety of difficulty levels and on a variety of topics.	•Scobre Press books provide differentiated instruction and texts by having two different reading levels; one on level and one that is on a level more accessible to struggling readers.
	•Having a variety of materials, focusing on several topics, cultures, and geographic locations—with books on two reading levels—helps to hold the attention of students with a variety of interests and specific needs. Topics range from baseball, football and basketball, to technology, music, dance, and medicine.
	•The books are high-interest, low readability, providing students with materials that are engaging, relevant, and interesting but below their frustration level.
	•Incorporating explicit comprehension strategies through these high-interest, low-difficulty texts are critical for fostering the reading skills of striving readers and the engagement of all students.
	•The design of the instruction allows for students to have more choices in self-selected reading, writing, and research projects.
	•Students are not only able to find representatives of themselves in these books, but are also able to find representatives of others about whom they wish to learn. The materials provide strong connections to students' background experiences and understanding.
7. Intensive writing, including instruction connected to the kinds of writing tasks students will have to perform well in high school and beyond.	•Students write intensively, incorporating their knowledge of the text and their own creative impulses relating to personal experiences.
	•There is also a focus on writing longer essays. These essay questions relate to specific content found in chapters in the book.
	•The writing activities and instruction connects to the reading comprehension strategies—assisting to improve reading abilities.
8. A technology component, which includes technology as a tool for and a topic of literacy instruction.	•Scobre's technology component is an extension of the student's intensive writing commitment. Connected to each book is an Internet Research Project, which asks students to research a specific athlete, past or present. Using the Internet as the main source for this project, students must answer questions about the athlete he/she has chosen, and be able to compare this athlete to the fictional and/or nonfictional athlete depicted in the book they recently read, in an organized essay, and/or classroom presentation.

	• *Legit: The Rise of a Cyber Athlete* is a new nonfiction Scobre Press book which focuses on interactive entertainment (the field of video game technology) and careers in that industry. The book focuses on the evolution of technology, gaming, and the cyber world. There are technology discussion questions associated with this new title.
9. Ongoing formative assessment of students, which is informal, often daily assessment of how students are progressing under current instructional practices.	•The reading comprehension questions located in the back of every book provides ongoing assessment information as to how students are progressing in learning and applying independent reading comprehension strategies. An instructor can review a student's answers to the questions for a clear analysis of their comprehension, and can compare their comprehension performance over the course of a quarter, a semester, or a full year. •An instructor can also assess vocabulary development over the course of a year, as each book comes equipped with a vocabulary list (one on level, and one at a level for striving readers) and a graphic organizer to be completed during reading.
10. Extended time for literacy, which includes approximately two to four hours of literacy instruction and practice that takes place in language arts and content-area classes.	•The *Dream Series* Literacy Program should be used on a daily basis, with 30-60 minutes per day of supported independent reading. • Due to the high-interest, motivational nature of the books in *The Dream Series,* assigning fun-to-read and relevant text as homework is a great way to extend learning and reading beyond the classroom. •The explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies teach students "how to learn." Students can easily transfer these strategies to other content-area texts and genres. •Teaching, modeling, and engaging students to use explicit comprehension strategies is done in a scaffolded fashion before, during, and after the reading which empower adolescents to use these comprehension strategies independently and in any learning setting.
11. Professional development that is both long term and ongoing.	•The *Teacher's Resource Guide* and *Dream Series* books provides many rich opportunities for educators to learn, practice, and apply the teaching of explicit reading comprehension strategies regardless of the subject they teach. •Provides professional development opportunities for integrating literacy instruction and strategies with career education, intervention, special education, physical education and health education teachers, instructors, and coaches. •Supports a whole-school literacy initiative as well as whole-school silent reading time.
12. Ongoing summative assessment of students and programs, which is more formal and provides data that are reported for accountability and research purposes.	•The teaching of explicit comprehension strategies connects to state instructional standards and state performance-based assessments. •Although increased motivation to read, career awareness, and character education is difficult to measure, it is reflected in better attendance, less behavior problems, and high school graduation rates.

13. Teacher teams, which are interdisciplinary teams that meet regularly to discuss students and align instruction.	•The *Teacher's Resource Guide* and *Dream Series* books provides many rich opportunities for educators to learn, practice, and apply the teaching of explicit reading comprehension strategies regardless of the subject they teach. •Provides a resource for teacher teams to meet and discuss mutual instructional strategies in varying instructional settings, and to align instructional expectations across grade level and across content area.
14. Leadership, which can come from principals and teachers who have a solid understanding of how to teach reading and writing to the full array of students present in schools.	•Can assist educators and school leadership to concretely understand how to teach reading comprehension strategies and increase student achievement in any instructional setting.
15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program, which is interdisciplinary and interdepartmental and may even coordinate with out-of-school organizations and the local community.	•Facilitating and coordinating interdisciplinary and interdepartmental literacy instruction is greatly enhanced by learning how to teach explicit reading comprehension strategies provided in the *Teacher's Resource Guide.* •The *Dream Series* Literacy Program incorporates the interests of students, along with a focus on improving the habits of struggling readers by supporting them during independent reading with graphic organizers that encourage interaction with text. Using differentiated instruction in order to facilitate choice—which is truly the parent of high-interest—this program creates a reading experience that is within the domain of every student, whether proficient or struggling. This program is also accessible in any classroom, as the *Teacher's Resource Guide* is designed to be flexible enough to use in learning environments filled with students reading, and learning, differently. •By pairing fiction and nonfiction texts, centering each book around an exciting, yet veiled, character-education component, and incorporating a technology element, this program is truly comprehensive, both in its educational components and the diversity and multicultural elements of the content the program is built around.

"Furthermore, the most recent review of the research on secondary literacy instruction—commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education—strongly reiterates and expands upon the findings of Reading Next and the subsequent reports (Torgesen et al., 2007). It concludes that in grades four through twelve, literacy instruction should address at least six key areas of concern: reading fluency; vocabulary knowledge; content knowledge; higher-level reasoning and thinking skills; reading comprehension strategies; and student motivation and engagement." (Alliance for Excellent Education, Issue Brief June 2007).

Biancarosa, G., and Snow, C. E. (2004.) *Reading Next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy: A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York.* Washington DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

For more information about the Reading Next report, please refer to www.ncte.org.

For more information about Scobre Press and *The Dream Series Reading Program,* or to read a chapter of any Scobre book online, please refer to our website, www.scobre.com.