

## ***Bringing Reading to Life*** and ***Still Learning to Read*** *Teaching Students in Grades 3-6*

**Franki Sibberson and Karen Szymusiak**

The saying goes that “children learn to read in grades K-2 and read to learn in grades 3 and up.” However, teachers in grades 3 through 6 are discovering this conventional wisdom is wrong: their students have to deal with an increasingly sophisticated range of texts that require additional reading skills. Upper-elementary teachers face the difficult task of trying to offer appropriate reading instruction just as many of their students have their first experiences with textbooks, high stakes exams, and complex reading in new genres.

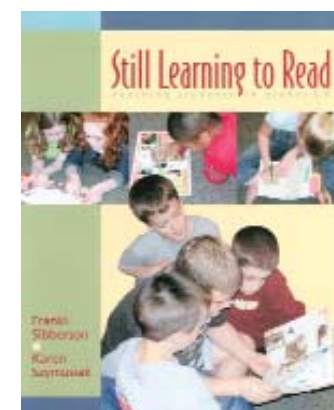
In *Still Learning to Read*, Franki Sibberson and Karen Szymusiak provide guidance on how to devote more time to reading instruction without neglecting the content demands of the curriculum. Because they work daily with students, the authors share a teacher's perspective on building reading instruction into the packed school day, and matching instruction and texts to the specific needs of older readers. Teachers will be inspired and reassured that reading in the upper elementary grades can be purposeful, thoughtful, and effective.

The book and video series include:

- planning forms for whole-class, small-group and individual instruction;
- assessment and conference strategies;
- detailed descriptions of how to use the readers' notebooks flexibly;
- annotated bibliographies of children's books to use in lesson design;
- activities to extend and deepen read aloud and whole-group conversations;
- tips for designing lessons using nonfiction texts and student magazines;
- ways to organize the classroom library to promote student independence;
- alternatives to levels for matching students, books, and skills instruction.

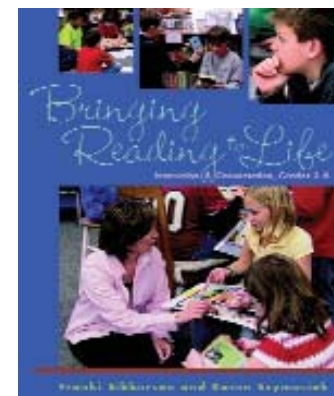
Are students in grades 3-6 still learning to read? You bet! And teachers who are still learning how to balance reading instruction with other instructional priorities at this level will find a wealth of helpful ideas in this book and videos.

### **Featured Book:**



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### **Featured Video:**



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*Bringing Reading to Life* and *Still Learning to Read* Read, Share, Teach Workshops were designed and piloted by Jennifer Allen, a literacy specialist from the Waterville Public School District, Waterville, Maine.

# WORKSHOP 1

## Goal

Participants will meet co-authors Franki Sibberson, a fifth-grade teacher in Dublin, Ohio, and Karen Szymusiak, an elementary principal, and explore ways Franki and Karen create a vibrant reading community.

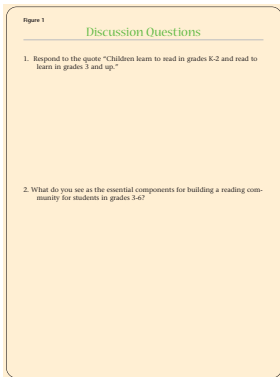


Figure 1



Figure 2

## Table of Contents: *Still Learning to Read*

1. Teaching Reading in the Upper Elementary Classroom  
**Part One: Making the Most of Time and Space**
2. Organizing the Classroom Library
3. Preparing for Thoughtful Instruction
4. Slowing Down During the First Six Weeks
5. Grouping Beyond Levels  
**Part Two: Threads of Learning Throughout the Year**
6. Conversations and Writing to Clarify Thinking
7. Browsing and Book Choice All Year Long
8. Reading Difficult Texts with Persistence and Stamina
9. Supporting Thinking with Evidence from the Text

*Epilogue*

*Appendix: Some Useful Forms*

*References*

## The Reading Community

### Materials Needed

You will need:

- ✓ Copy of *Still Learning to Read*
- ✓ Copy of video series *Bringing Reading to Life* Program 1, The Reading Community
- ✓ Copy of Discussion Questions (Figure 1) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of Two-Column Notes: Similarities to My Classroom/Differences (Figure 2) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of Two-Column Notes: What I'd Like to Try in My Classroom/What I Am Thinking About (Figure 3) for each participant

Participants Will Need:

- ✓ Copy of *Still Learning to Read* by Franki Sibberson and Karen Szymusiak

### Small-Group Discussion

15 Minutes

Distribute copies of Discussion Questions (Figure 1). Ask everyone to preview the front and back cover of *Still Learning to Read*. Have participants write answers to the questions, and then break into groups of three or four to discuss the responses.

### Viewing the Video

20 Minutes

Distribute copies of Two-Column Notes: Similarities to My Classroom/Differences (Figure 2) and ask participants to take notes while viewing the segments. Show the first three sections of Program 1, The

Reading Community. This includes the "Introduction," "Morning Arrival: *Time for Kids*," and "'Talk Worthy' Book: *The Report Card*." As participants watch the video, have them focus on Franki's classroom environment.

## Whole-Group Discussion

10 Minutes

As a group, discuss how Franki's classroom is organized. You might ask these questions:

- What do you notice about the design or use of space in Franki's classroom?
- What do you notice about the way Franki talks with children?
- What do you notice about Franki's role as the teacher?

## Reading the Excerpt

15 Minutes

Have participants read "Teaching Reading in the Upper Elementary Classroom" (pp. 1-10) from *Still Learning to Read* silently. These pages discuss the instructional reading needs of students in grades 3-6.

## Putting Ideas into Practice

5 Minutes

Ask participants to read Chapter 3, "Preparing for Thoughtful Instruction" from *Still Learning to Read* before the next workshop session. Distribute copies of Two-Column Notes: What I'd Like to Try in My Classroom/ What I Am Thinking About (Figure 3) and ask everyone to jot down notes while reading the text. Ask participants to try out one new idea and be ready to share their experience or new questions at the next workshop. Encourage participants to bring samples of student work to the next workshop.

*Possible ideas to try:* implementing a new classroom routine, reorganization of classroom library, testing a strategy for helping students choose books

## Follow-Up Between Workshop Sessions

Two days before the next session, put a reminder in participants' mailboxes of what they need to bring to the next workshop.

### *What Participants Need to Bring to the Next Workshop*

- *Still Learning to Read*
- Completed Two-Column Notes: What I'd Like to Try in My Classroom/ What I am Thinking About (Figure 3)

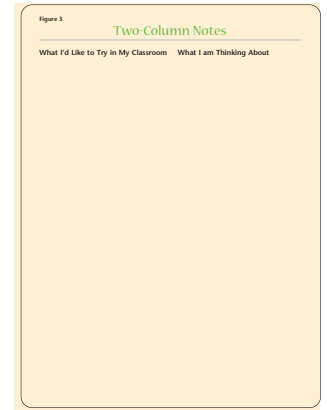


Figure 3



# WORKSHOP 2

## Goal

In this workshop, participants will consider how Franki defines her role as teacher in a variety of whole-class, small-group, and individual settings.

Figure 4

Small-Group Questions

What are you thinking about as a result of the last session?

What's working well in your classroom?

What might be potential roadblocks to implementing change in your classroom?

Figure 4

Figure 5

Two-Column Notes

What Franki Says	What Students Do

Figure 5

# The Teacher's Role

## Materials Needed

You will need:

- ✓ Copy of *Still Learning to Read*
- ✓ Copy of video series *Bringing Reading to Life* Program 2, The Teacher's Role
- ✓ Copy of Small-Group Discussion Questions for each participant (Figure 4)
- ✓ Copy of Two-Column Notes: What Franki Says/What Students Do (Figure 5) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of Preview Text from *Sea Clocks* (Figure 6) for each participant

Participants will need:

- ✓ Copy of *Still Learning to Read*

## Small-Group Discussion

10 Minutes

Distribute Small-Group Questions (Figure 4) and have everyone write their answers silently (5 minutes). Break into groups of three or four to discuss and share new thinking.

## Viewing the Video

20 Minutes

Distribute copies of Two-Column Notes: What Franki Says/What Students Do (Figure 5) and ask participants to take notes as they watch the videos. Show the following video segments from Program 2, The Teacher's Role, "Introduction," "Previewing a Book: *Sea Clocks*," and "Reading Notebook Discussions." These segments present Franki's role within the classroom, emphasizing how she encourages her students to take responsibility for their own learning. Distribute copies of Preview Text from *Sea Clocks* (Figure 6) so everyone can follow along with the text as they watch the student discussion.

## Whole-Group Discussion

15 Minutes

Discuss notes and observations from viewing the videos. Questions to use in guiding the discussion might include: What observations have teachers made about Franki's role in the classroom? How does Franki transfer responsibility for previewing *Sea Clocks* to her students? How do students use their notebooks in different ways?

## Reading the Excerpt

10 Minutes

Ask participants to read “Reading Notebooks: Writing to Develop Thinking” (pp. 36-40) from *Still Learning to Read*. These pages discuss reading notebooks and how they are organized in Franki’s room. Ask participants to think about how reading notebooks might be used in their classrooms in new ways.

## Putting Ideas into Practice

5 Minutes

Ask participants to read Chapter 4 from *Still Learning to Read* before the next workshop session. In this chapter, Franki shares her thinking about classroom schedules and preparations for the start of the school year. Ask participants to try out one new idea and be ready to share their experience or new questions at the next workshop. Encourage everyone to bring samples of student work to the next workshop.

*Possible ideas to try:* implementing reading notebooks, book previewing a book with the whole class, revising the reading schedule

## Follow-Up Between Workshop Sessions

Two days before the next session, put a reminder in participants’ mailboxes of what they need to bring to the next workshop.

### *What Participants Need to Bring to the Next Workshop*

✓ *Still Learning to Read*



Figure 6



# WORKSHOP 3



In this workshop, participants will view a range of reading groups and think about a variety of ways of organizing groups.

Figure 4

Small-Group Questions

What are you thinking about as a result of the last session?

What's working well in your classroom?

What might be potential roadblocks to implementing change in your classroom?

Figure 4

Figure 7

Three-Column Notes

Group	Franki's Role	Does Reading Level Matter?

Figure 7

## Reading Groups

### Materials Needed

You will need:

- ✓ Copy of *Still Learning to Read*
- ✓ Copy of video series *Bringing Reading to Life* Program 4, Reading Groups
- ✓ Copy of Small-Group Discussion Questions (Figure 4) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of Three-Column Notes: Group/Franki's Role/Does Reading Level Matter? (Figure 7) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of *Esperanza Rising* Group Preparation Sheet (Figure 8) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of *The Summer My Father Was Ten* Theme Sheet (Figure 9) for each participant

Participants will need:

- ✓ Copy of *Still Learning to Read*

### Small-Group Discussion

10 Minutes

Distribute Small-Group Questions (Figure 4) and have everyone write their answers silently (5 minutes). Break into groups of three or four to discuss and share responses.

### Video Segment

20 Minutes

Distribute copies of Three-Column Notes: Group/Franki's Role/Does Reading Level Matter? (Figure 7) and ask participants to take notes as they observe. Show video segments from Program 4, Reading Groups, "Introduction," "Student-Led Group: *Esperanza Rising*," "Rereading: Touching Spirit Bear," and "Finding Themes: *The Summer My Father Was Ten*." These segments show students in various reading groups and how Franki supports their needs and interests. You may also want to distribute copies of *Esperanza Rising* Group Preparation Sheet and *The Summer My Father Was Ten* Theme Sheet (Figures 8 and 9) before beginning the video. These are forms used by students in the reading groups.

### Whole-Group Discussion

15 minutes

As a whole-group discuss what you viewed. Questions you might use to lead the discussion include

What is Franki's role in each of the groups? How can teachers design reflection sheets that raise the level of thinking and understanding for students? How can these forms assess student under-

standing and be used to inform instruction? How might these forms be overused and abused?

## Reading Excerpt

10 Minutes

Ask everyone to read “Thinking Through Grouping” (pp. 64-68) from *Still Learning to Read* silently. These pages explore how Franki and Karen think through various ways to group students for instructional.

## Putting Ideas into Practice

5 Minutes

Ask participants to read Chapter 5 from *Still Learning to Read* as a follow-up to this session. Encourage everyone to try at least one new idea based on today’s workshop.

*Possible ideas to try:* develop a reflection form and try it out in a book group, implement a student-led book group, let students sign up for a book group of their choice

## Follow-Up Between Workshop Sessions

Two days before the next session, put a reminder in participants’ mailboxes of what they need to bring to the next workshop.

### *What Participants Need to Bring to the Next Workshop*

✓ *Still Learning to Read*



Figure 8

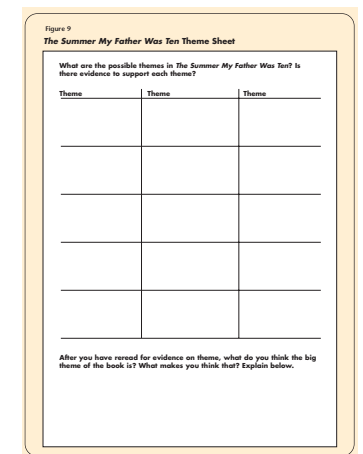


Figure 9



# WORKSHOP 4

## Goal

In this workshop, participants will view Franki and her class in the midst of whole class read-alouds, and discuss how to help students have more thoughtful conversations during read-aloud sessions.

Figure 4  
Small-Group Questions

What are you thinking about as a result of the last session?

What's working well in your classroom?

What might be potential roadblocks to implementing change in your classroom?

Figure 4

Figure 10  
Three-Column Notes

Structure	Flow of Conversation	Franki's Role

Figure 10

# Taking the Conversation Deeper: Read Aloud

## Materials Needed

You will need:

- ✓ Copy of *Still Learning to Read*
- ✓ Copy of video series *Bringing Reading to Life* Program 3, Taking the Conversation Deeper: Read-Alouds
- ✓ Copy of Small-Group Discussion Questions (Figure 4) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of Three-Column Notes: Structure/Flow of Conversation/ Franki's Role (Figure 10) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of Leah's Reading Notebook Excerpt (Figure 11) for each participant
- ✓ Copy of Final Reflection (Figure 12) for each participant

Participants will need:

- ✓ Copy of *Still Learning to Read*

## Small-Group Discussion

10 Minutes

Distribute Small-Group Questions (Figure 4), and have everyone write their answers silently (5 minutes). Break into groups of three or four to discuss and share new thinking.

## Video Segment

15 Minutes

Distribute copies of Three-Column Notes: Structure/Flow of Conversation/ Franki's Role (Figure 10) and ask participants to note the flow of conversation during read-aloud. Show the video segments "Introduction," "Tracking Ideas and Themes: *A Single Shard*," and "Before Read-Aloud Chat: *A Single Shard*." These segments show how Franki uses read-alouds, reading notebooks, and "read-aloud chats" as ways to promote deep thinking with her students. You might also distribute copies of Leah's Reading Notebook Excerpt (Figure 11), so that participants can glimpse a student's reading notebook excerpt from the read-aloud.

## Whole-Group Discussion

10 Minutes

As a whole group discuss what you viewed. Franki almost always begins read-aloud with some focused discussion. How does the discussion support students? How do you help students remember the story or previous discussions before you begin read-aloud each day?

## Reading Excerpt

10 minutes

Ask everyone to read “Rethinking Whole-Class Books and Read-Aloud” (pp. 78-83) from *Still Learning to Read* silently. These pages explore the different possibilities for read-aloud within the classroom. Ask participants to think about how they might improve read-alouds in their classrooms.

## Whole-Group Discussion

10 Minutes

Distribute copies of Leah’s Reading Notebook Excerpt (Figure 11). How does Leah track her thinking while listening to the read-aloud? What are some possibilities for helping students use their reading notebooks in new ways during read-aloud?

*Possible ideas to try:* implementing a reading notebook, trying an open-ended discussion at the start of read-aloud, having students track characters during read-aloud.

## Final Reflection

5 Minutes

Distribute Final Reflection (Figure 12) and ask everyone to write their answers silently (5 minutes). Collect responses and use them for follow-up discussions with individuals and planning future workshop sessions.

## Follow-Up Sessions

If you have time for more than four sessions, you might try the workshop suggestions in the *Bringing Reading to Life* viewing guide or create your own combination of segments and excerpts to view, read, and discuss. Some participants may prefer to view videos and read excerpts from the book individually or in small groups, and then share their learning with others.

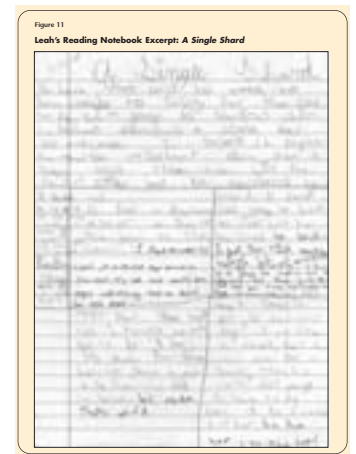


Figure 11

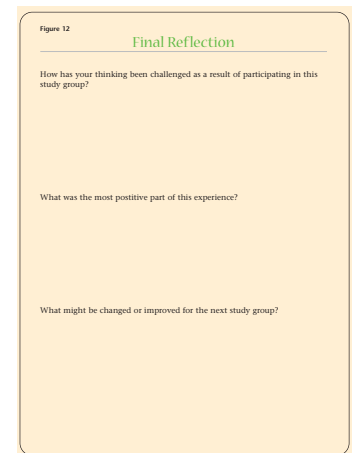


Figure 12



Figure 2

## Two-Column Notes

Similarities to My Classroom

Differences

Figure 3

## Two-Column Notes

What I'd Like to Try in My Classroom

What I am Thinking About

--	--

Figure 4

## Small-Group Questions

---

What are you thinking about as a result of the last session?

What's working well in your classroom?

What might be potential roadblocks to implementing change in your classroom?

Figure 5

## Two-Column Notes

<b>What Franki Says</b>	<b>What Students Do</b>

Figure 6

**Preview Text from *Sea Clocks***

“For hundreds of years  
ships had been sailing  
to places far and near  
*without really knowing  
where they were!*”

Sailors knew how to measure latitude, their location north or south of the equator, but they could not measure longitude, their location east or west of their home port. Because of this, many lives were lost worldwide. The key to solving this problem lay in devising a clock that could keep absolutely accurate time while at sea, unaltered by rough water or weather conditions. With such a timekeeper sailors would be able to know the time back at their home port and calculate the longitude. But no one knew how to design such a clock.

John Harrison (1693–1776), an Englishman without any scientific training, worked tirelessly for more than forty years to create a perfect clock. The solution to this problem was so important that an award of 20,000 pounds sterling (equal to several million dollars today) was established by the English Parliament in 1714. Harrison won recognition for his work in 1773.

Together with beautifully detailed pictures by Erik Blegvad, Louise Borden’s text takes the reader through the drama, disappointments, and successes that filled Harrison’s quest to invent the perfect sea clock.

Figure 7

## Three-Column Notes

<b>Group</b>	<b>Franki's Role</b>	<b>Does Reading Level Matter?</b>

Figure 8

## Esperanza Rising Group Preparation Sheet

Plan for Reading Discussion Group

Which book/piece will you be reading and discussing with your group?

Esperanza rising

How did you decide on this book?

It seemed like a book that would have a lot of themes and threads to figure out.

Why does this book/piece interest you?

One part was the title and cover, because I was wondering if it was a fantasy (she really rose) or if she rose some other way. Plus I wanted to know if she ever got rich again.

Why do you think this book is talk worthy?

Well, it is from a long time ago, and at first I didn't realize that. And since she never actually rose into the sky in the book, you kind of have to figure out how she did rise.

List the members of your group:

Shannon Kelsey Courtney  
Karyn Kelsie Leah Julie Kelly

When will your group meet? (date and time)

4/5  
Reading workshop

How will you prepare for the discussion?

I will do what I always do, put all of my post-its on one page and look over them to refresh my memory of all my thoughts, predictions, questions, ect.

Figure 9

### ***The Summer My Father Was Ten* Theme Sheet**

**What are the possible themes in *The Summer My Father Was Ten*? Is there evidence to support each theme?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Theme</b>

**After you have reread for evidence on theme, what do you think the big theme of the book is? What makes you think that? Explain below.**

Figure 10

## Three-Column Notes

<b>Structure</b>	<b>Flow of Conversation</b>	<b>Franki's Role</b>

Figure 11

Leah's Reading Notebook Excerpt: *A Single Shard*

3-31-09	A Single Shard	
	<p>He have what will he need to been work to repay for the pot. to pay for m going to Fallow when the broken mendings a crane be pot and cause I think it might the other be important. Also when it things says crane-man. Will the he did straw box be mendend again</p>	
I think	<p>he is <sup>sup</sup> is that a decision to try and look at of the pot? the boy on the and the pot I think the author did</p>	<p>chap 2 I think he's going to break m. That must be the thing he broke I bet tree-ear will make better pot. did he get splinters? I think he is going to make a pot of clay and will then give the pot and will make him happy. he has to say your due tom.</p>
Fallow	<p>a good job on the first page because he described very well and made the page interesting and he told he was poor</p>	
	<p>How. When that odd. I thought he only had to do 9 days. like mad. That's strange hes not going to give it to him. Why did he break his crutch. That's wild</p>	<p>chip. 4 Does he get to eat every day? is it like a snack, that he can get for a break from his work. Hes going to have to do more if he figures out that he hit</p>
		<p>her in the head</p>

Figure 12

## Final Reflection

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How has your thinking been challenged as a result of participating in this study group?

What was the most positive part of this experience?

What might be changed or improved for the next study group?

## Time Cues for *Bring Reading to Life*

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### Program 1: The Reading Community 30:52

1-1	Introduction	00:00–02:20 (02:20)
1-2	Morning Arrival: <i>Time for Kids</i>	02:20–08:55 (06:35)
1-3	“Talkworthy” Book: <i>The Report Card</i>	08:55–14:50 (05:55)
1-4	Student Choice: Discussion for Reading Groups	14:50–21:47 (06:57)
1-5	Expanding the Reading Community: Rereading	21:47–26:07 (04:20)
1-6	The Home-School Connection: <i>Dear Mother, Dear Daughter</i>	26:07–30:17 (04:10)

### Program 2: The Teacher’s Role 33:50

2-1	Introduction	00:00–01:45 (01:45)
2-2	Previewing a Book: <i>Sea Clocks</i>	01:45–11:45 (10:00)
2-3	<i>Time for Kids</i> Binders	11:45–20:10 (08:25)
2-4	Reading Notebooks Discussion	20:10–28:40 (08:30)
2-5	Knowing Ourselves as Readers: Fantasy Group	28:40–33:15 (04:35)

### Program 3: Taking the Conversation Deeper: Read-Alouds 31:50

3-1	Introduction	00:00–01:55 (01:55)
3-2	Tracking Ideas and Themes: <i>A Single Shard</i>	01:55–09:25 (07:30)
3-3	Before Read-Aloud Chat: <i>A Single Shard</i>	09:25–15:40 (06:25)
3-4	After Read-Aloud: Big Questions from <i>The Birthday Room</i>	15:40–25:10 (09:30)
3-5	Big Questions Discussion: <i>The Birthday Room</i>	25:10–31:15 (06:05)

### Program 4: Reading Groups 33:40

4-1	Introduction	00:00–01:55 (01:55)
4-2	New Genre: <i>Becoming Joe DiMaggio</i>	01:55–10:30 (08:35)
4-3	Student-Led Group: <i>Esperanza Rising</i>	10:30–16:44 (06:14)
4-4	Rereading: <i>Touching Spirit Bear</i>	16:44–23:15 (06:29)
4-5	Finding Themes: <i>The Summer My Father Was Ten</i>	3:15–33:05 (09:50)