
From Theory to Practice: The Story of *Read Side by Side*

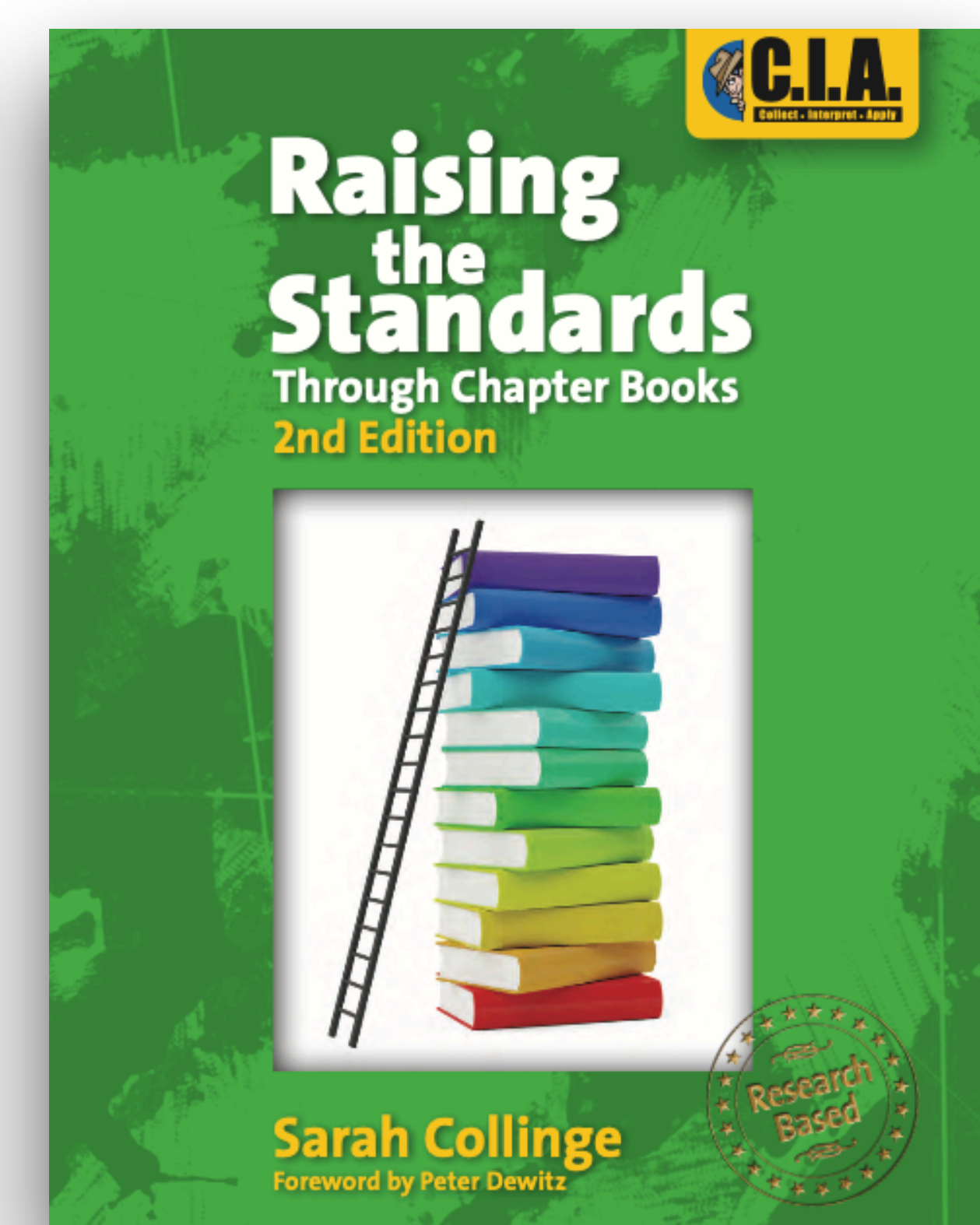
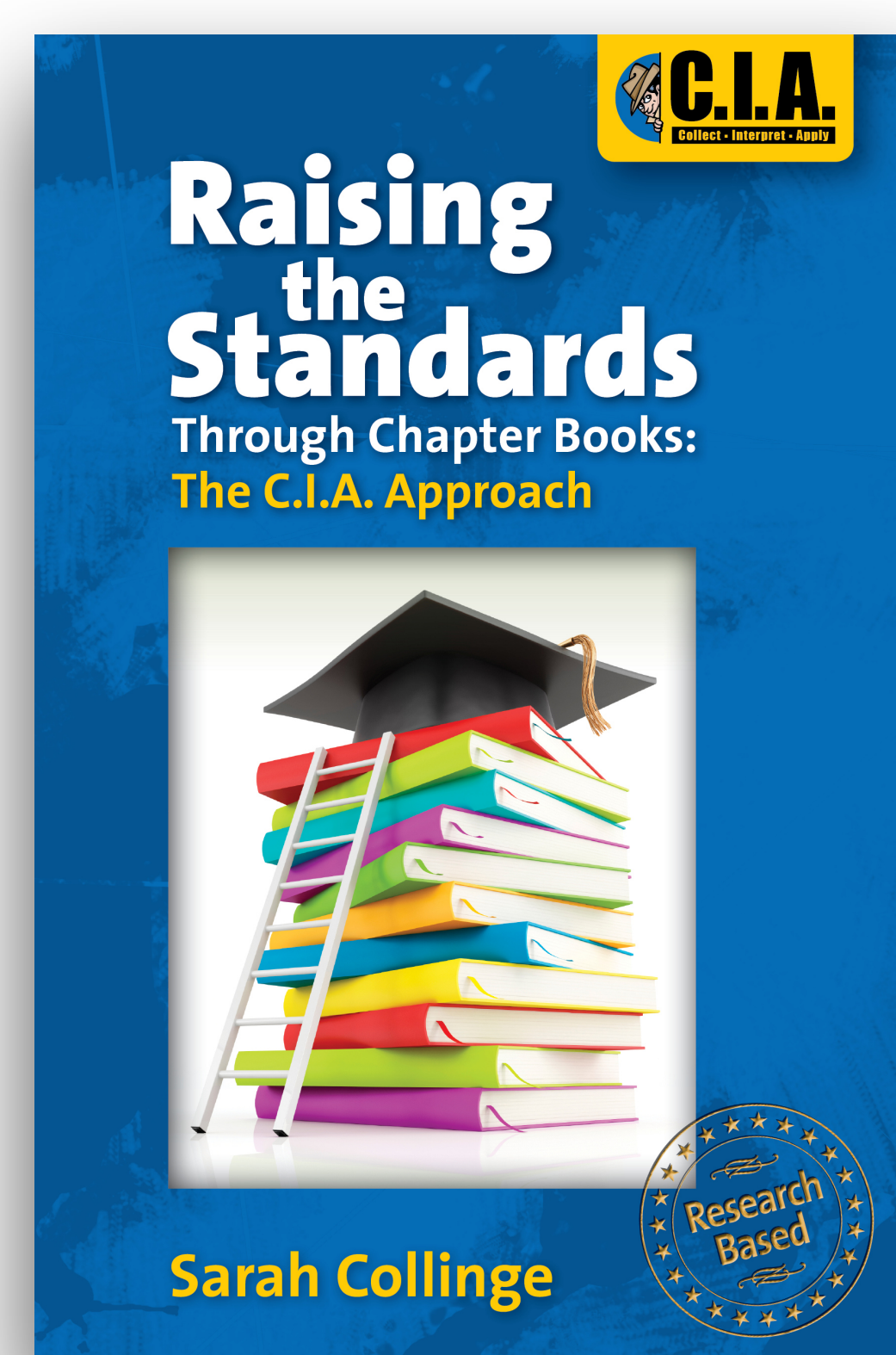
The key requirement of the Common Core State Standards is that *all* students are able to comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity as they progress through school (CCSSI, 2010). Many educators are searching for answers to the question of how we close the gap between the reader and these complex text levels. Sarah Collinge, author of *Raising the Standards through Chapter Books* and the *C. I. A. Units of Study*, offers a solution that is transforming classrooms across the globe.

The Problem

In 2003, Sarah Collinge, a classroom teacher in Washington State, became very concerned that her students were not confidently and successfully stretching themselves into higher, more complex fiction and nonfiction. Instead, students were continually selecting titles that felt easy and just right. For many students, easy series books like The Magic Tree House series and the Junie B. Jones series remained favorites from second grade all the way up through fifth grade. Collinge became concerned about her students' motivation to read longer, more challenging books. Would they be ready in just two years for the demands of eighth-grade reading?

“I realized that my students had not built stamina for reading longer text, in part due to the materials given to me by my district, which focused on using short text and excerpts of novels for modeling and instruction,” says Collinge, who at the time was teaching fifth-graders and using a basal reading program. “In addition, my students did not have an understanding of the comprehension work readers do while reading longer texts and of how that work is similar to or different from what they have learned to do in shorter texts.”

Collinge chose to face these challenges head-on. She applied for a sabbatical and took two years to research. Much of that time was spent researching in Title 1 classrooms, grades 3-6, where Collinge believed there was an urgent need.



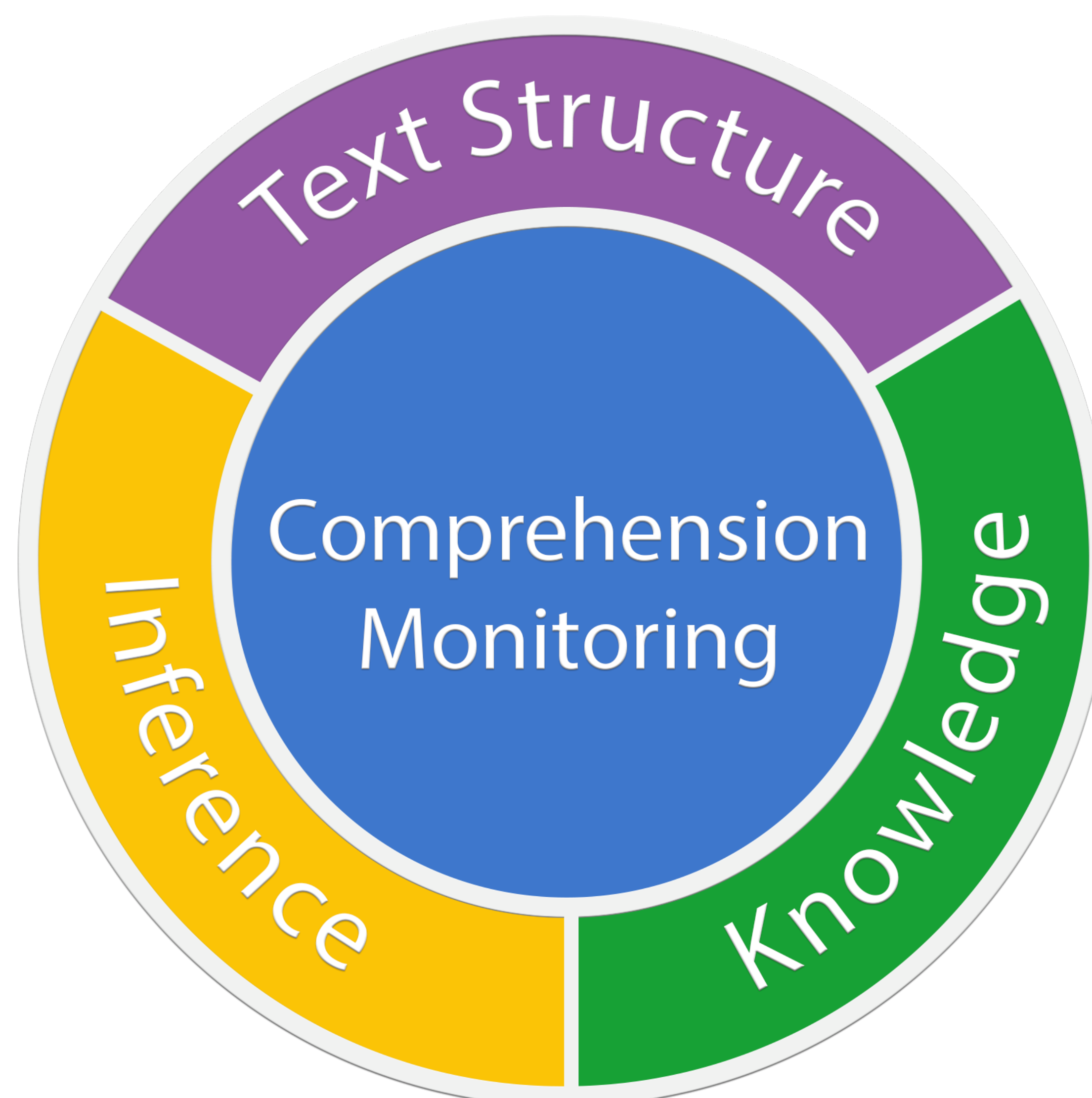
Raising the Standards through Chapter Books: The CIA Approach is published in October 2011 and outlines Collinge's research in Title 1 schools. It is now in its second edition.

The Research

“While educators have made good progress in teaching children to decode, it’s disheartening that we still have not overcome the ‘fourth-grade slump’ in reading comprehension. We’re finding that even though the vast majority of our youngest readers can manage simple texts, many students—particularly those from low-income families—struggle when it comes time in grade four to tackle more advanced academic texts” (Hirsch, 2003).

In her research of reading comprehension, Collinge learned that “readers who are unaware of text structure do not approach a text with any particular plan of action. Students who are aware of text structure organize the text as they read, and they recognize and retain the important information it contains” (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). This information was critical in Collinge’s research because it pointed to the need to focus students’ attention on text structure, in order to explicitly teach students a plan of action for reading with comprehension.

“It suddenly became very clear to me that the way I could increase students’ understanding of text was to help them understand that all narrative texts, including narrative nonfiction, have a predictable structure that can be used to draw the reader’s attention to the most important elements of the text and draw them to the larger message of the book,” said Collinge, when describing the most ground-breaking part of her research.

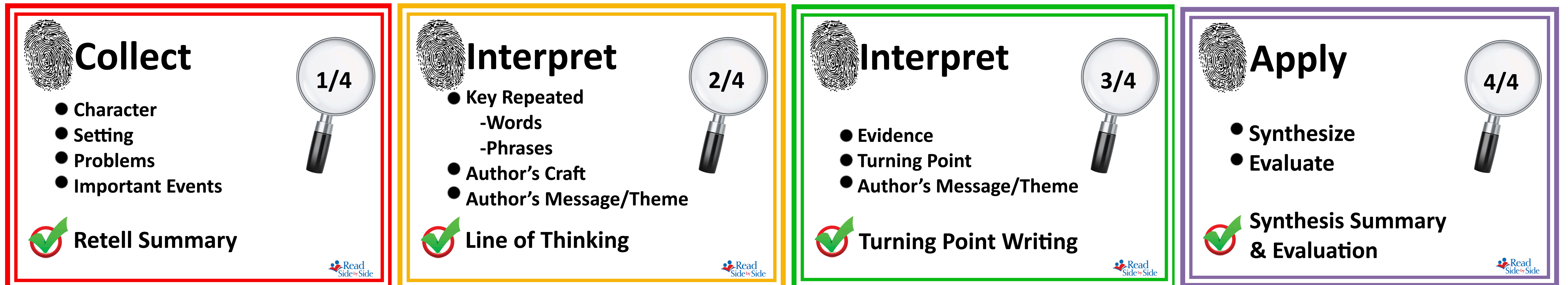


Evidence-based strategies for reading comprehension.

Recognizing this need for a consistent plan of action her students could apply in a variety of texts, Collinge began to craft her innovative C. I. A.—collect, interpret, apply—approach to reading. More than an acronym, the collect, interpret, apply design pushes readers authentically from low-level, explicit thinking, to higher levels of interpretation and application across a text.

The C. I. A. Approach

“I teach my students to divide the text into four relatively equal sections. They simply take the number of pages in the book and divide by four, and then they mark the end of each quadrant with sticky notes. They know that in quadrant one they will be collecting critical information, in quadrants two and three they will be interpreting the text, and that in the final quadrant of the book they will be evaluating the author’s message and considering its application to their life.”



The C. I. A. (Collect-Interpret-Apply) approach provides a plan-of-action for reading texts. It is based on the theory that where you are in the book matters.

This four-quadrant formula makes Collinge’s approach truly innovative. No other reading program attends to the structure of text so explicitly.

In the first part of the text, the exposition, readers pay attention to the critical information in the text (character, setting, problem, and important events). This foundational knowledge is a necessary precursor to the qualitative demands of the rising action.

Crossing over from the first quadrant of the text into the second quadrant marks the shift from observing what is obvious in the text to noticing what is hidden or ambiguous. Readers will feel the cognitive weight of the text increase as they move from the exposition into the rising action. This rising action is where the author begins to use his or her craft to draw the reader to the central message of the book. By the time the readers reach the halfway point in the story, they have a theory about what the author is trying to tell them.

“Often [authors] don’t know what it is [they] really want to say until [they] get into the writing of a book,” explains Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, author of the book *Shiloh*—a favorite of Collinge’s students. The message of the book begins with a nugget—something that has happened to the author or something he or she feels really strongly about, and through the process of writing, that nugget becomes the story’s center “ (Reading Rockets, 2015).

The C. I. A. Approach Cont.

Finding the story's center is the ultimate goal of the readers who use Collinge's approach. By the time they reach the end of quadrant two, readers have developed a theory about what the author is trying to tell them in the book. They carry this theory into the third quadrant, where they read to gather the evidence from the text.

As readers press through quadrant two into quadrant three, their sole purpose is to uncover evidence that supports their line of thinking. In Collinge's program, readers collect evidence in the Evidence Collection Box, using paraphrases and direct quotes pulled from the text.

Evidence Collection Box	
<u>Line of Thinking:</u>	
Martin Luther King Jr. is an important person to know about because he believed in peace.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Martin became a minister so that he could support the black community.• Martin hated violence.• Martin led the Montgomery Bus Boycott.• After his home was bombed, Martin told the black community, "I want you to love our enemies." p. 34	

Sample Evidence Collection Box third-grade students create during the study of Martin Luther King Jr. in Unit 3.3 of the Read Side by Side Reading Program.

Gathering evidence from the text to support the author's message is a text-based activity that is receiving considerable attention in schools that are aligning to the Common Core State Standards. Teachers are looking for ways to increase this work in their classrooms in a way that is authentic to the work of reading.

Teaching Authentic Reading Habits

Perhaps it is the authenticity of her approach that makes Collinge’s design so well-received by teachers and students. It is during the last quadrant of the book that Collinge makes sure to schedule an uninterrupted block of reading time to allow students to feel the momentum of reading all the way to the end of the book. “Students feel as though we have closed a door to the outside world so that we can linger in the joy of reading,” she comments. As they finish the book, readers reflect on their whole experience. They summarize the book, evaluate the author’s message, and consider the application of that message to their lives.



*Fourth-grade students reading *The Castle in the Attic* together in a class-made castle.*

The most inspiring part of Collinge’s story is that she took her C. I. A. approach beyond theory and has now written units of study for read-aloud and book club structures that complete a comprehensive literacy program for grades 3-6. This program is aligned to the research of the Common Core State Standards and seeks to eliminate the disparities in reading comprehension by providing *all* students access to rich, complex literature and grade-level standards. “Allowing all children access to a wide volume of reading opportunities, whether teacher-directed or self-selected, will grow their sense of the riches available through text and will help ensure they are able to and love reading” (Liben and Liben, 2014).



The Read Side by Side Reading Program is a comprehensive curriculum for grades 3-6 and is focused on chapter book reading.

In Summary

The C. I. A approach models the authentic reading habits of expert readers who are reading new genres or authors and who are selecting longer, more difficult texts. It breaks the reading process down into manageable steps by collecting critical information, interpreting the text, and applying the text to one's own life. This model blends the most current research findings with “old ideas and simple prescriptions—the key to better results” (Schmoker, 2011).

Teachers who have implemented the C. I. A. model in their classrooms admit that they will no longer teach reading any other way. Amazed by the engagement of their students and the impact of the approach on school and state test scores, they feel confident in the instruction they provide. For many the approach puts the fun back into teaching.

When Collinge left the classroom to write in 2011, she could not have imagined the impact she would have on students and teachers. As a self-published author and small business owner, her program is now used in schools across the United States and internationally. Her business model puts students and teachers at the forefront and continues to break-the-mold by offering affordable, sustainable, and evidence based products for schools desiring to *raise the standards* for all students. Collinge's curriculum meets and exceeds those expectations!



Eatonville School District in Washington State is honored as a school of distinction after adopting the Read Side by Side Reading Program.

**For more information on the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*,
visit ReadSideBySide.com**