

Raising the Standards

**Through Chapter Books
2nd Edition**

Sarah Collinge
Foreword by Peter Dewitz



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*To my mother, who instilled in me
a passion for literacy,
a love of learning,
and the joy of teaching.*

Thank you for inspiring me to achieve my dreams.

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So here I am, a passionate teacher and author—proof that when you believe in yourself and have the lavish support of truly amazing people, you will be blessed.

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This book began as an opportunity to reflect on the incredible experience I was given teaching students and, later, coaching teachers in the Mukilteo School District in Washington State. Without those 11 years of teaching and intense professional training, I would not have the synthesis of knowledge that I bring to this book. I would like to thank all the teachers who have shared this work with me. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have partnered with such talented professionals. Thank you for teaching me, believing in me, and sharing life with me. You have been wonderful mentors and the greatest of friends.

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Foreword

Reading comprehension is built on and enabled by knowledge—knowledge of concepts, experiences, text structures, and words. Good readers use cognitive strategies such as self-questioning, making inferences, clarifying and summarizing, to assemble this knowledge into an understanding of the texts. The right instructional techniques will help students acquire these strategies. For years I have studied how basal reading programs, which two-thirds of American schools use, teach children to read. At one point, I served on the author team of one basal reading program and as a consultant to another. Later I studied the instructional design of these programs. The more I came to understand how basal programs work, the more I grew disillusioned with them.

Most basal reading programs have a very predictable structure that has remained the same for decades: The teacher teaches a few skills and vocabulary words, then students apply those skills to a short text, frequently an excerpt from a children's novel or an article about science or history. The pattern is repeated, and the week ends with a test on those skills. The last week of the school year looks just like the first week, year after year. Students remain in short text instead of advancing to longer, more complex literature. In many classrooms little is done to move children into the wider world of children's literature.

With the arrival of the Common Core State Standards in 2010, smaller "boutique" companies sprang up, seeking to provide an alternative to basal reading programs. One was Read Side by Side, founded by Sarah Collinge. I came upon this company by happenstance. About six years ago, after I had finished speaking at the International Literacy Association's annual conference, a woman approached me and thrust a large packet of materials in my hands and a book titled *Raising the*

Standards through Chapter Books. The woman was Bethany Robinson, and her boldness compelled me to dig into the book and materials immediately. Within a month, I was on a plane to Seattle to meet these two dynamic sisters and learn all I could about their exciting work.

What Sarah outlines in this book is an approach to reading that solves many critical problems in reading education. First, she developed an approach to reading longer, more complex fiction and nonfiction that takes readers through the stages of collecting critical information, interpreting the text, and finally applying the text to their own life. This collect, interpret, apply (CIA) model gives students a road map to follow while reading a novel. CIA then increases the reader's confidence and competence to read not only novels but biographies and nonfiction trade books.

Learning to read with novels means that children will read three times the volume of a typical basal reading program. They will read enough to become fluent readers. They will read enough to encounter thousands of new words, build their vocabulary, and expand their understanding of the world. They will read enough different books to develop a taste for reading or refine the taste they already have.

The approach is deceptively simple: initially each book is divided into four relatively equal parts, then read using the CIA method.

Collect, the "C" in CIA, follows the dictum of Vladimir Nabokov that the reader "should notice and fondle details." Children begin by collecting information about narrative structure, learning about characters, setting, and problems. CIA incorporates the research on teaching narrative structure.

Interpret, the "I" in CIA, guides students to make inferences essential for comprehension. Authors count on the reader to add what they only imply to reach an understanding of character traits, motives, and themes. As Virginia Woolf wrote, "great writers require us to make heroic efforts in order to read them rightly." Toward the second and third quarters of the book, students stop and write, pulling together what they have learned. Writing develops and enriches reading

comprehension; and as Woolf says, it makes us “an accomplice with the author.”

Apply, the “A” in CIA, also has several parts. The reader completes his construction of the plot and his portraits of the characters. He arrives at some truths about the character, solidifies his understanding of the themes, and relates them to his own life.

This book guides classroom teachers in how to teach this approach with any book. Sarah incorporates stories, photographs, and examples from her classroom to illustrate this process. Now, the *Read Side by Side Reading Program* (Collinge, 2011) is a companion curriculum that teaches the CIA approach in a thematic structure, with each unit in the program explicitly teaching a genre, topic, and theme. A quasi-experimental study demonstrates the efficacy of this program (Dewitz, 2017).

In the United States, we have two reading problems:

- First, students don’t read well, certainly not as well as they did 60 years ago. Most research on reading and reading instruction is trying to solve this problem.

The question is, how do we get students to apply what they have been taught? If we are successful as teachers, the student takes what the teacher has modeled and explained and applies it to all the texts to come. The CIA approach has a unique solution to solving this problem of skill transfer. Students learn a text-structure approach to reading that repeats with each text read. Rigor is built into the process through the text selection; readers move into increasingly more complex genres, text structures, and types as they gain confidence in the approach. In the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*, students first learn these skills in an instructional read-aloud, then transfer these skills to books they are reading within the structures of book clubs and self-selected reading.

What naturally follows, as Woolf suggests, is an “after reading . . . where the reader holds the book clear, secure, and complete in [his] mind.” The reader judges the value of the book and rejoices in the pleasure of having

read it. He judges it both against other books he has read and those he will read. A student who successfully reads an enjoyable book has the impetus to do it again and again. And that success directly addresses the second problem.

- We—adults, adolescents, and children—do not read as much as we did 50 years ago. That problem draws less attention, but it is equally acute. Because we read less, we get our information and entertainment from sources that undermine our ability to think. Text messages, sound bites, Web pages, and tweets do not develop the depth of knowledge and the ability to think that modern life demands. As social psychologist Jonathon Haidt recently wrote, “social media are making us stupid.”

Sarah’s approach to reading chapter books is helping to solve this problem by offering a reading approach and program that motivate and stimulate children to read by giving them just enough instruction to ensure their success. She gets the balance of skill and will correct. This second edition of the book, fine-tuned, reflects updated standards and reading research. Teachers and administrators who read this book will learn to appreciate the complex nature of reading longer novels and nonfiction and be outfitted with the tools to increase students’ motivation and success.

Time will tell whether the CIA method will forever change literacy education for the better. For now, this is the best solution we have. I know you will be inspired to begin *Raising the Standards* for your students, in your classroom.

Peter Dewitz, PhD

Preface

It is hard to believe that just 10+ years ago I left the classroom with a dream to write a book and a reading curriculum. I was 35 and had two little girls at home, a five-year-old and a three-year-old. I knew nothing about publishing or how to run a small business. Instead, I had 11 years of teaching experience in Title 1 schools and a vision for how to inspire a love of reading in students while increasing their reading skill. Most important, I had a fan club—a large support group of teachers, students, clients, and family members cheering me on. So many people wanted this dream of mine to succeed, and succeed it did.

When I left the classroom, I didn't even have a finished manuscript or a publisher. I had a very rough draft of what would become the book *Raising the Standards through Chapter Books*. I spent the summer writing, and by the time my mom, sister, and I traveled to Chicago for a reading conference, we were able to carry the published book with us. It was thrilling. I remember my mom sitting in the hotel lobby reading it, just waiting for a teacher to ask, "What are you reading?"

This book outlines the theory and structure of the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*, a curriculum for grades 3–6 built on chapter-book reading. It was first published in November 2011 before any units of study were printed for classroom use. Shortly after its printing, the first read-aloud units were published, *Unit 4.1 Shiloh* and *Unit 5.1 Earthquake Terror*. By the following year, I had published five read-aloud units and was beginning to write the first book club units for the program. Several schools and districts had already become clients and were anxiously waiting for each unit to publish.

Now, the *Read Side by Side Reading Program* is a three-part curriculum for grades 3–6. Part 1 is the read-aloud instruction, where the teacher reads the text aloud to the students as they follow along

in their own copy of the text. Students are brought into the lesson through turn-and-talk discussion, taking notes, and writing. Part 2 is the book club instruction, where students read books differentiated to their reading level and transfer the skills learned in the read-aloud to texts that they are reading. Book club time is where the magic happens; students become competent, confident readers. Their interest and motivation to read increases, and they can't wait to read the next book in the genre or series. Part 3 provides a collection of books to fuel their passion for reading.

In belated celebration of the tenth birthday of *Raising the Standards*, I now offer this updated edition. This new publication keeps the voice of the classroom teacher including the stories, photographs, and student samples pulled right from my fifth-grade classroom. The newness of the book is found in the way that it better explains how to implement these structures in modern classrooms, responding to the concerns and questions of today's teachers.

As always, new buzz words are included. Next Generation Standards (NGSS, 2013) are referenced alongside Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010). In some cases, the term "science of reading" has replaced "research based."

All of the chapters have been updated to better reflect the curriculum that accompanies it, with the heaviest revisions in chapters 1 and 7. Teachers who read this book will take away a strong understanding of how to teach the *Read Side by Side Reading Program* in their classroom. More than that, they will gain a better understanding of how to align reading instruction with the science of reading and the authentic practices of expert readers.

Although much has been added, some has also been taken away. With the recent publication of the *Assessment and Intervention Guide for the Read Side by Side Reading Program* (Dewitz & Collinge, 2020), I felt it unnecessary to expand the topic of assessment. Instead, I have trimmed the topic of assessment and direct teachers to this new exhaustive resource.

You will find more tools for classroom use in the appendix, and all of them can be downloaded from the classroom resource page at <https://www.readsidebyside.com/resources>. I invite you to explore the website thoroughly, where many valuable resources are provided for teachers at no cost.

Raising the Standards is being used to train teachers in the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*. A video book study accompanies the book, providing a short video to accompany each chapter. This video book study can be found at <https://www.readsidebyside.com/raising-the-standards-study>.



Videos are used as a companion to Raising the Standards in an online video book study.

If you want to purchase the *Read Side by Side Reading Program* and/or have questions, please contact me at the website: [Readsidebyside.com](https://www.readsidebyside.com), or by e-mail: info@readsidebyside.com.

Introduction

It is the beginning of the school year, and as I unpack boxes of September supplies, I find a poster that a local bookstore sent to me to track students' completion of books. With good intentions, I hang up this poster in my classroom and write all my students' names on the chart. As the first week commences, I plan to spend much of my time laying the foundation for independent reading by teaching students how to select books from the classroom library and how to set goals for what they will read this year. This work starts in conversations, in both whole-group discussions and one-on-one at my conference table.

Identifying Trends

Before my small groups begin, I invest time to learn about my students through interest surveys and conferring during independent reading (see appendix). The purpose of these conferences is to find out who my students are as readers—what books they like to read, what strategies they know and use, and how they think and talk about books. Every year I am shocked at the lack of intention and purpose my fifth graders have as they begin reading self-selected books. All of them are reading chapter books and carefully selecting texts at their independent reading levels. Yet, after reading the first few chapters, many of my students are unable to tell me the most critical information about their books. They are reading with the misconception that, at some point, the books will magically make sense to them. Unfortunately, no one can read by magic, and therefore I know that these students will begin the cyclical process of selecting and abandoning text.

I want my students to read with engagement and purpose, rather than by magic. But what does that type of reading look like in the

context of a chapter book, and how do I teach it? To understand the process, I return to my conference table.

Damon's Story

It is day two, and for the first time, my students are going into the classroom library to shop for books. I have spent two days discussing how readers pick a book based on interest and stamina. I know that for many, these lessons will need to be retaught repeatedly throughout the year. I pick up my notebook and begin to observe students as they select books, jotting notes as I watch.

Damon walks over to the library and immediately approaches the book bin containing the Last Dragon Chronicles. He quickly grabs the first book, *Firestar* (d'Lacey, 2007), and heads back to his seat. He opens the book and begins reading page 1. At this point, I am curious. Did he know what he wanted to read before he went back to my library? What made him pick that Chronicle? Will this book be too difficult for him? I quickly make a note to conference with him within the week.

The next day, I pull Damon back to my conference table and begin our discussion about his book choice. He tells me that he picked this book because his cousin recommended it. He is clearly very excited to read the book. I ask him to open to the page he has reached, and he begins to read aloud. I take careful notes to determine whether the book is at his level. Because he makes only three errors on the page, I know that he is in the right book. But I am still concerned about its length. In two days of independent reading, Damon has read only four pages. At this pace, I know it will be difficult to sustain his interest over the length of the text.

The question becomes this: How do I help students develop the stamina to read longer texts? I know this isn't just about Damon's book choice. It is about the many students in my classroom who, despite their interest, are unable to finish longer texts. It is about helping them reach the large goal of finishing a book such as *Firestar* by dividing it into manageable pieces.

Alex's Story

Next, I approach Alex, who has decided to read the first book in the *Warriors* series, *Into the Wild* (Hunter, 2003). He already has a good start on the book after taking it home for nightly reading. He is well into chapter 3, and he communicates to me that it feels “just right” for him. I begin by asking him basic questions about the story, including questions about the main character. Alex easily shares, but he excludes the character’s name. I stop him in his description and inquire about the name. He is stumped. Alex, like many other students with whom I conference, has failed to recognize the importance of recalling important information about the main character. Without my intervention, Alex would continue reading the book while missing an important piece of understanding.

I quickly note that if I am going to help readers access longer, more complex texts, I must begin by helping them collect critical information early in those texts: character, setting, and plot.

Brisa's Story

Later in the week, I sit next to Brisa, an on-grade-level reader, who is reading one of the Judy Moody books by Megan McDonald (2000). I quickly note that she has already switched books, abandoning her first book choice, *Olive's Ocean* by Kevin Henkes (2005). I settle into our conference by asking what prompted her to switch books. Brisa indicates that *Olive's Ocean* was too hard and that she likes reading books in the Judy Moody series because she read many of them in fourth grade. This is a common trend that emerges in intermediate classrooms: students abandoning grade-level texts to return to comfortable series books. I take note of Brisa’s words and continue our discussion. I’m interested in what makes Judy Moody a comfortable series for Brisa. I quickly get my answer.

Brisa begins to tell me everything she knows about Judy Moody. She understands this character’s circumstance and knows why this character behaves the way she does. She also recognizes the predictability of

the plot across the many books in this series. Before reading this new Judy Moody book, Brisa already knows exactly how the book will go. Brisa, like all readers, finds comfort in predictability.

Rising to the Challenge

At this point, I feel like a detective who has been investigating a crime. Common trends across my classroom have emerged, and I know the pitfalls students face as they launch into grade-level-appropriate texts.

1. My students have not built the stamina for reading longer texts and need support in setting manageable goals.
2. My students do not understand the comprehension work that readers do while reading longer texts and how that work is similar to or different from what they have learned to do in shorter texts. The use of comprehension strategies in complex text will need to be taught explicitly to help bridge this learning gap.
3. My students do not know the predictable elements within each genre, so they gravitate back to easy series books. Therefore, I will need to teach genres so that they become predictable and comfortable for my students in the same way that series are.

I know these trends are all too familiar to you, because teachers have shared similar stories with me over my years of research. It can be very overwhelming to see these habits and behaviors resurface every year, despite your consistent efforts to explicitly teach independent reading strategies. I am here to encourage you.

The research conducted throughout my career has focused on how best to meet the needs of readers who are struggling to read increasingly difficult texts proficiently. I have sought to name the authentic processes expert readers use and to make these processes explicit for students. In my years as a classroom teacher, literacy coach, and now consultant, my theories grew out of the most current and most significant research findings, now referred to as the “science of reading.”

Focusing on best practices outlined in, for example, the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000), the ACT report *Reading Between the Lines* (2006), and the RAND Reading Study Group's *Reading for Understanding* (2002), and on findings published by the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI, 2010), I began to develop classroom instructional routines that promoted practices supported by research. Prioritizing my work at all times were the real-life interactions with students in classrooms of diverse learners.

The amount of knowledge I gained in these years of research was immense. Constantly challenged by new ideas and practices, I found myself returning to a simple list of priorities that proved central to increased literacy skills in my students—reading, writing, and talking intensively across the school day (Schmoker, 2011).

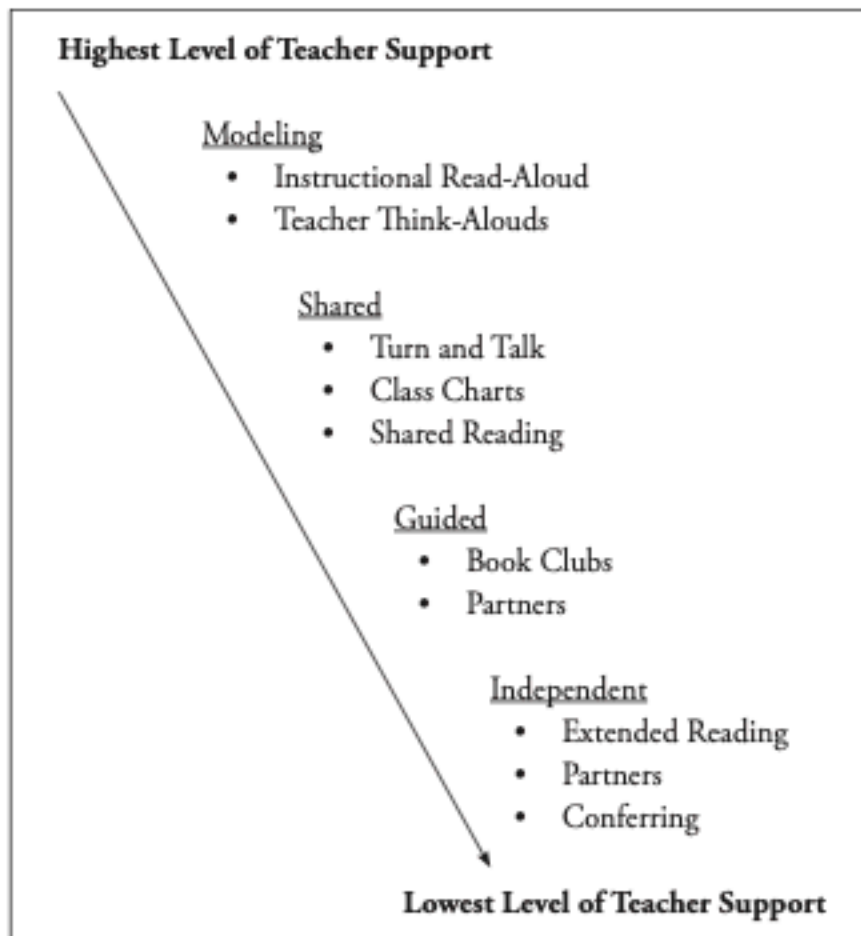
The **collect, interpret, apply (CIA)** approach to reading and the curriculum that accompanies it force these priorities into our classrooms through core practices outlined in this book. In addition, the approach raises the standards we have outlined for students by allowing them to practice these standards in increasingly complex texts. Raising standards is not about redefining skills or strategies across grade levels: rather, it is about applying the same strategies and skills in progressively more demanding texts.

The CIA approach models the authentic habits of expert readers who are reading new genres or authors and who are selecting longer, more difficult texts. It breaks down the reading process into manageable steps of 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, loc. 188).

Although many teachers now teach the approach with the *Read Side by Side Reading Program* to guide them, it is important to point out that the CIA approach can be taught in any book; teachers may use the framework to build their own curriculum units.

Teachers who have implemented the CIA model in their classrooms admit that they will no longer teach reading in 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.

The success of the program is due in part to the way the structure of the program is built around the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). This framework moves students from explicit modeling toward independence through guided practice and is backed by myriad research, including work presented in the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (NICHD, 2000). In the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*, lessons move from teacher modeling and shared practice in the read-aloud to guided practice and independent practice in book clubs and independent reading. This three-part structure (read-aloud, book club, and extended reading) has been proven to increase reading comprehension in readers with a range of abilities (NICHD, 2000).

Figure 0.1 Gradual Release of Responsibility

*Adapted from the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model
(Pearson & Gallagher, 1983)*

In this book, you will read about each stage of the CIA model and how to use research-based classroom routines to support it. You will learn to use the gradual release model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) across instructional routines. As you read, you will be convinced that the CIA approach is applicable to all readers, including struggling readers who, despite their reading levels, still need to be doing the thinking work that grade-level texts demand of them. Along the way, you will learn how readers keep notebooks that they can use as essential tools for comprehension. Student work samples will demonstrate how the level of thinking increases across texts, from strategy work to analysis and evaluation.

The work outlined in the CIA model is new and innovative. Yet, the approach is backed by current research and implements rigorous standards outlined in our nation's Common Core State Standards (CCSSI, 2010) and Next Generation Standards (NGSS, 2013). I believe that in reading this book, you will come to the conclusion that the approach is easy to implement, powerful, and effective. As a result, you will make this approach to teaching reading a priority in your classroom as you seek to align your instruction with increasing literacy demands. You will be amazed as your students become empowered to read and enjoy books as a lifelong habit. You may even begin to use this approach in your personal reading life, proving the program to be truly authentic to the work of expert readers.