



## Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

### Single-Strategy Instruction: Asking “Wh-” Questions

Graham Road Elementary School, Virginia • October 2010

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension  
Practice: Teach Comprehension Strategies

#### Highlights

- Katherine Rountree, a second-grade teacher at Graham Road Elementary School, demonstrates how she uses a single-strategy approach to teach questioning.
- The lesson focuses on asking “wh-” questions, specifically those beginning with *how* and *why*, and locating text evidence to support answers.
- This lesson on questioning relates to another recommended practice: Focus on Text Structure.
- Rountree begins with a review of previous strategies, then models new questioning strategies using a thinkaloud approach.
- Instruction is extended to small-group guided reading activities and independent center and partner work.
- Instructional tools include a classroom anchor chart and a graphic organizer developed during a grade-level team meeting.
- Graham Road teachers begin slowly by teaching a single strategy, then work up to helping students develop a “toolbox” of multiple comprehension strategies.

## About the Site

### Graham Road Elementary School

### Falls Church, VA

### Demographics

69% Hispanic

13% Asian or Pacific Islander

10% Black

3% White

4% Other

85% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

58% English Language Learners

12% Special Education

Through extensive school turnaround efforts, Graham Road Elementary has become a high-performing school with an enriched academic program that is tailored to the needs of its diverse student body.

- The school has developed a standards-based reading curriculum to serve as its core reading program.
- Teachers begin with a single-strategy approach and help students learn and use multiple comprehension strategies over time.
- Text discussion begins in kindergarten through establishing partner sharing routines and providing practice with the teacher and peers.
- A balanced literacy approach guides reading and comprehension instruction.
- Language development is incorporated into instruction as a way of increasing comprehension.
- Teachers attend weekly grade-level professional learning community meetings to plan cohesive standards-driven lessons.
- Quarterly data meetings are held to discuss student achievement and to see how specific classes are performing.

## Full Transcript

### Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Single-Strategy Instruction: Asking “Wh-” Questions.

### Slide 2: Introducing Katherine Rountree

My name is Katherine Rountree. I teach second grade at Graham Road Elementary School.

Right now I am focusing on one specific standard during guided reading as well as during their individual work, and I’m hoping to incorporate multiple reading strategies and comprehension strategies as we build up to that point.

#### Slide 3: Focus on one strategy

Our standard involves asking *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* questions. At our PLC [professional learning community], we created a visual anchor chart so that students can use it to understand what each word in the question means and [be] able to access that from their own personal experience. The anchor chart is a hand, and each finger is a different question with a picture that goes along with it, and then in the middle we have our “how.” So there is

- “Who?” is a smiley face;
- “What?” is the numbers 1, 2, 3 for sequencing;
- “Where” is a house, a place;
- “When?” is a clock;
- “Why?” is a question mark; and
- “How?” are footsteps.

Basically, talking about when we ask how questions, we usually expect them to say the steps the characters went through to solve a problem, for instance.

#### Slide 4: Practice previous strategies

I started with a quick link to access students’ background knowledge and practice things that they are very familiar with. Students, they used the question stems they’ve already heard and worked with earlier this week to ask questions about each other’s lives.

They each received one card with a question on it, and they found a partner, asked each other the questions, listened to the answers, and then traded the questions and found new partners. And that way, we use this type of strategy to get students involved with each other. They are active right away; it’s accessing things they have already done, and they were ready to move on with the lesson.

#### Slide 5: Model questioning

I selected my read-aloud text based on the two question stems I taught today, the *how* and the *why*. I was using the thinkaloud strategy to show students how to read a question, go back to the story and think about what tools a good reader will use to access the answer.

#### Slide 6: Active learning

I went into a more active way to teach the *how* question stem, because *why* is something that they are very familiar with and *how* is a little more tricky for our English speakers of other languages. I had my students stand up and find a spot in the room, and after I gave them a question, they showed me with their bodies their answer.

The struggle for my students stems from their lack of exposure to the vocabulary and language that I use in my classroom. I use visuals constantly. I make sure that I am accessing their knowledge not just verbally but kinesthetically so that they can demonstrate their understanding and they can connect to my instruction in a way that works for them.

#### Slide 7: Independent center work

After my interactive read-aloud, I explained their individual center work. I developed a graphic organizer with my PLC team that addresses each question for an independent book. However, because the children have not been exposed to all of the questions at once, I actually cut the graphic organizer into strips. And so students could choose one question stem that they could record their answers to and find their answers in the evidence independently.

#### Slide 8: Small-group guided reading

During that time, I was also pulling small groups to my guided reading table and going further and deeper with the *how* and *why* questions by reading the text, by having comprehension questions and discussions about the text, and by differentiating my instruction.

I chose text that could be answered all the five Ws questions, because we use one text over a length of time. So I wanted to make sure that they are getting the instruction broken down, but they are able to use that independently and with a teacher, incorporating all of the questions.

#### Slide 9: Comprehension assessment

I am very sure that I am taking anecdotal notes in order to assess their understanding of the question and whether they are able to locate their answers in the text. I also use the graphic organizers that they use independently to assess their understanding of what they can do by themselves with their independently leveled books.

Slide 10: Partner work

After guided reading, I had a ten-minute reflection block planned in. They chose an independent reading book. They used question stems that I had on the board and chose which ones they wanted to ask their partner. So they know they have this reflection time where they are able to express their thoughts, share their opinions about their text, and really have a discussion with multiple partners about what they read today and about what we have been practicing.

Slide 11: A strategy “toolbox”

We started very slow to make sure that our management was in place and our expectations were very clear and consistent. At this point in the year, I am expecting them to work on the current standard that we are teaching. And once they develop a toolbox with all of those different strategies, that’s when I will go back and think about how they can use their time effectively during independent work to improve upon a standard that we already talked about.

Slide 12: Build on comprehension strategies

During upcoming lessons, I am going to be incorporating all of the different question stems, and I’m also going to give them more opportunities to ask their own questions. After my students demonstrate their knowledge of these questions by asking, answering, and locating, I’m planning on diving deeper with those inferential questions and having them justify their opinions based on the text.

Slide 13: Learn more

To learn more about Single-Strategy Instruction: Asking “Wh-” Questions, please see the additional materials on the Doing What Works website.