



Who's Doing the Work?: How to Say Less So Readers Can Do More

Jan Burkins , Kim Yaris

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In their follow-up to *Reading Wellness*, Jan Burkins and Kim Yaris explore how some traditional scaffolding practices may actually rob students of important learning opportunities and independence. *Who's Doing the Work?* suggests ways to make small but powerful adjustments to instruction that hold students accountable for their own learning.

Educators everywhere are concerned about students whose reading development inexplicably plateaus, as well as those who face challenging texts without applying the strategies they've been taught. When such problems arise, our instinct is to do more. But when we summarize text before reading or guide students when they encounter difficult words, are we leading them to depend on our support? If we want students to use strategies independently, Jan and Kim believe that we must question the ways our scaffolding is getting in the way.

Next generation reading instruction is responsive to students' needs, and it develops readers who can integrate reading strategies without prompting from instructors. In *Who's Doing The Work?*, Jan and Kim examine how instructional mainstays such as read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading look in classrooms where students do more of the work. Classroom snapshots at the end of each chapter help translate the ideas in the book into practice.

Who's Doing the Work? offers a vision for adjusting reading instruction to better align with the goal of creating independent, proficient, and joyful readers.

Who's Doing the Work?: How to Say Less So Readers Can Do More Details

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Claudia says

I started this book two years ago...over two years ago. Then I lost it. Then I found it. Then I finished it. Then it blew the top of my head off.

Another one of those books about reading I wanted to write. I spent time in my career in the elementary classroom, in a Title I reading classroom, and in high school ELA classrooms. I could have used this book in every setting...I will use it in my current setting, teaching ELA student interns.

The authors talk about four time-honored instructional models, and stretch us to think about 'next generation' adaptations: read aloud, shared reading (everyone has the same book, teacher reads, students follow or read along with), guided reading (the old reading groups model), and independent reading.

They make the point that we intervene too early, too often, and too consistently, in the hard work of students: making meaning. They tell us to hold back our 'help' and help students develop strategies.

They blow the metaphor of scaffolding to bits...for jobs at upper elevations, painters will ALWAYS need scaffolds. They'll never grow ten feet taller. Scaffolds are a tool that will never be replaced.

Their metaphor is dance class...with the intentional teaching, co-practicing, modeling, and gradual release of supports as dancers become more skilled. I like that.

MY biggest take away is how we need to monitor our questions and responses when working with students...how each of these instruction models lends itself to a different kind of supportive questions.

The questions are simple, tiny shifts of emphasis...nothing earth-shattering, but so meaningful...instead of asking in a conference, "What's going on in your book?" ask "What are you thinking about as you read? Can you tell me more? What strategies are working? What's next?" Nothing new...just a solid group of questions that will probe more and leave the hard work for students to do, not teachers.

I like the suggestion of creating a running list of strategies that have worked for students through all the reading models...a chart that would be displayed as students work together, and then, ultimately, as they work independently. Those strategies that students have already identified as helpful become part of the conversation.

While this book is focused on young readers, everything here can be easily adapted for high school classes.

The heart of the book is this quote by David Sousa: "The brain that does the work is the brain that does the learning."

Laura says

Who's Doing the Work? nicely walks readers through how to best support students without shouldering too much of the thinking, thus decreasing the learning that students do. Burkins and Yaris look at "next generation" read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. In all of these instructional

contexts, changes to teacher prompts can maximize student thinking. What can you try? What's next? What is this making you think about? are just a few turns of phrase worth incorporating into teaching.

Heather says

Great read. Highlights the learned helplessness some students have, and provides an alternative.

The Reading Countess says

A quick read for novice teachers, this book takes a look at all aspects of reading in the elementary classroom. From the often neglected read aloud, to shared reading, to small group to independent reading, the authors look at how it has been taught in the test-driven (i. e. teacher-led) environment and juxtaposes how these crucial components to literacy should be taught. After all, we aren't going to trail behind every reader and intro. unknown words or set the stage for them all their lives, right? If independence is what we need, then we should step out of the picture more and let them fly. Practical for newbies, nothing aha for seasoned teachers.

Rosemary says

Every teacher of reading should have this book! Wonderful concept on stepping back and allowing the students to do the work of decoding and comprehending.

Yvette Beutel says

This is the best book I've read on coaching reading. The authors lay out clearly the steps from modelled reading through shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading, providing clear indications of promising practices and examples of classroom implementation from different grade levels. The pathways described here lead to student autonomy and help teachers revisit their strategies in reading support.

Kathryn says

Every teacher should read this book! Starting with balanced literacy instruction principles with a student-centered approach, but with a new lens toward student agency and independence. This is a book that is needed to help shift our focus from the work that we are doing to how we create the conditions for the students doing the thinking and learning work in the literacy classroom.

Josh says

This really enlightened my perception on read-alouds and provided great support for implementing

independent reading in class.

Lisa says

Good overview of read aloud, shared reading and guided reading. Not a fan of the independent reading section- doesn't really allow for instruction during this time, which is so important. Missing a section on whole group minilessons, to tie all of the other components together.

Christine Fitzgerald says

“When children inhabit worlds where teachers let them do the work, they learn from their productive effort.” This is a great resource to share with all teaching faculty. Very clear and practical guides for how to help students become more empowered in their reading lives.

Sean Brewer says

A simple professional development book for all educators. It reminds us that as educators we sometimes have a tendency to guide our students' thinking, and this book reinforces the ideas that real learning comes from the mystery and the struggle our students will endure with reading new text and books.

Shelley Fenton says

This professional book will shift your thinking about how you support students on their journey to become independent strategic readers. Jan Burkins and Kim Yaris provide real-life scenarios to support this work. It is a must-read for all literacy teachers.

Lori says

A great book for beginning teachers. Nicely organized. Well researched. Covers the pitfalls of leveling books, the importance of read alouds, and compares and contrasts conventional with "next generation" shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading.

Read Ribbet says

Burkins and Yaris take on four traditional dimensions of literacy programs (read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading.) Their basic premise is that in traditional views of these practices, it is the teacher not the students that seem to be doing all the work minimizing the power of the instructional routines. They describe practical 2.0 strategies to shift the work to the students with a primary focus on the language teachers use with their students. The book provides readers with ways to improve instructional

routines they are already using so they can better support the students in literacy programs.

Pamela says

One of the best profesional development texts that I've read! I am rethinking daily what I say to my students, what I expect of them, and considering greatly when I need to STOP TALKING so that the students can do the work! This has impacted the way I teach greatly! I'm actually going to read it again with a study group. IT was great!
