



# Northeast School Principal's Newsletter

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## Reading at Northeast

One cannot argue that reading is one of the most fundamental skills children learn at school. It is truly the gateway to all other learning. I'm sure we all could share stories about our own personal journeys with learning to read. Superficially, there might be some similarities in our stories. Worksheets with words and pictures to help with letter sounds and simple stories read out loud to the entire class were common practice. Educators, now, have deeper understanding of the human brain, it's capacity for learning. Our newfound knowledge has led to new classroom practices and has ultimately reshaped our approach to reading.



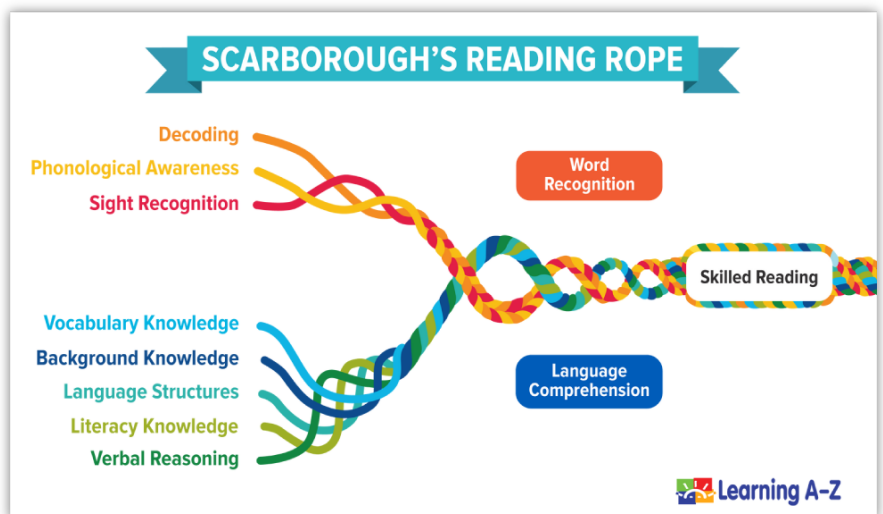
Northeast has a scaffolded approach to reading instruction. We generally divide the school into two groups of students based on expected abilities at these age levels, kindergarten through second grade and third through fifth grade. Our youngest students are “**learning to read**” while our older cohort is “**reading to learn**”. It's a very important distinction to make.

### Learning to Read

When a child first begins the process of learning to read their exposure to letters, letter sounds, words and context are critical. Learning to read for understanding requires sounding out and recognizing words or **decoding** as well as making meaning of the words and sentences we hear or **language comprehension**.

This philosophy is not specific to Northeast. It is the foundation of a methodology called the **Science of Reading**. The Science of Reading is a broad, interdisciplinary approach to reading and writing. For over five decades, the Science of Reading has been used across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages.

Visualizing how all this works can be difficult. A diagram we like to use and refer to is Scarborough's Reading Rope (pictured below). Scarborough's Reading Rope captures the complexity of learning to read. Scarborough's Reading Rope is made up of lower and upper strands. When all these component parts intertwine it results in skilled and accurate, fluent reading with strong comprehension.



In this work we have identified six key components that contribute to successful beginning reading: oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. To ensure that all our teachers are tackling these big six components in the same way, Northeast utilizes common structured programs like **Fundations** and **Collaborative Classroom**. Both programs are essential to guide us in developing fluent readers, skilled writers.

## **What's the Difference**



**Fundations** is a structured literacy program that is both fun and effective. Students in Kindergarten through second grade cover structured reading, spelling, and handwriting curriculum using engaging, multisensory techniques.

**Collaborative Classroom** helps children develop as proficient readers and writers. Along with the functional aspect of reading and writing students learn to appreciate the ideas and opinions of others, learn to agree and disagree respectfully, think critically about big ideas, and become responsible citizens of the world. All these skills are essential to support strong reading comprehension skills.



## **What would I see if I walked into a 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom?**

Most classes are designed to follow the “I do, we do, you do” model, which is exactly like what it sounds like. First the teacher begins with a mini lesson, where the teacher will explicitly model a specific skill or strategy. Students will then practice the skill with support from the teacher. Lastly, students will apply the same skill/strategy in their “just right” books while they are independently reading. “Just right” books are books selected for individual students that are at their specific reading level.

In addition, students will also engage in guided reading groups and independent reading conferences throughout the week.

Fundations, which has a highly structured scope and sequence, is used so that each phonics skill builds upon the previously taught skill. During these lessons the children can be seen engaging in activities such as sky writing, sand writing, and the use of magnetic tile boards. Students are encouraged to use sound tapping to tap and blend words to help decode and encode words.

## **Reading to Learn**

At about 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, for most students, a major shift has already started to happen. Students should now have what it takes to attack reading material, understand what they’ve read and apply this information to form new concepts. This ability to use what they’ve read to learn is a skill that fosters their independence in accessing information. Suddenly, in the classroom we can introduce content-based material and dive deeper into critical thinking.

## **What would I see if I walked into a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom?**

In a 5<sup>th</sup> grade ELA classroom during reading instruction, students can be found reading a novel of their choice and responding to their reading on post-its for a discussion later. This early strategy for annotating, helps students select important information and demonstrate their comprehension. Additionally, students will talk about their reading using an anchor chart of “talking stems” or phrases used to prompt discussion.

...this part made me think of

...I can connect to

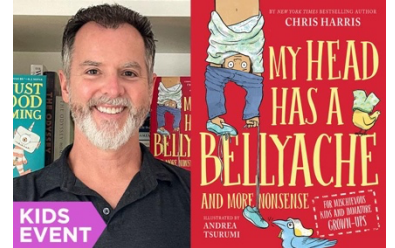
...this book is like another book I read because

...from my reading today, I can infer

A teacher might also be instructing a mini lesson on a specific skill like summarizing. After a read-aloud students would get a chance to practice the skill independently. A closure activity might include turning and talking to a partner, using the summarizing skill verbally, and the "somebody, wanted, so, but, then" model. Ultimately, we are having these students demonstrate how they understood and can apply what they've read.

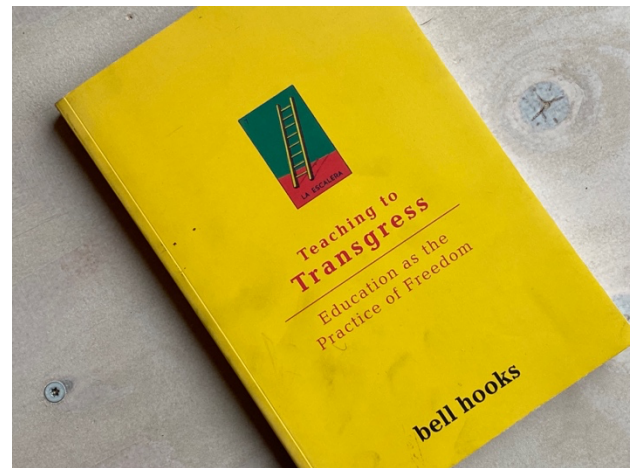
## Empowering Our Readers

Our kids imitate our behaviors. It is important that we punctuate the importance of reading in their lives. This can take shape in many ways. Reading every night with them at home, reading next to them to model your attachment to reading, taking them to a bookstore as a treat, participating in a town book swap or just asking your children about the reading material they're interested in can have a major impact on how they see value in reading. To excite our students about reading, Northeast will be hosting our annual bookfair and author visits next week! The **Book Fair** will take place from **November 15<sup>th</sup> through November 18<sup>th</sup>** culminating with our pancake breakfast on Saturday. On November 16<sup>th</sup>, the entire school will get to meet author Chris Harris who will treat them to a read aloud and book discussion.



## Northeast Reading Together...There is Still Time!

Northeast teachers spent many years talking, meeting, thinking about and finally, writing and submitting a grant to the MFEE for Excellence in Education with a focus on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging. Last June, Northeast was awarded \$10,000 for the grant entitled, 'Increasing Racial Literacy at Northeast'. This grant will be implemented over the next year and kicks off with a book club. All staff, parents and caregivers are invited to the first discussion/meeting. Save the date for **Thursday, November 16 at 6pm**.



The title is, *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks. In it, hooks leads us through complex, crucial, and uncomfortable discussions on race, class, gender, sexuality, and other frameworks for understanding oppression that are imperative parts in the transformation of education into a practice of freedom. Hooks leaves the reader saying that profound commitment to engaged teaching is taxing to the spirit, but it is important to take on this challenge head-on.

The group will be co-facilitated by Northeast's own, Lorrie Hunter (Kindergarten) and Ali Campbell (5<sup>th</sup> grade). **Dinner** and **childcare** will be provided. The first ten signups receive a free book. Sign up here to be part of the discussion, and even more so, be part of the change:

<https://forms.gle/YfFy2hh5ikLnLxoZA>

**Northeast  
PTA  
Book Fair**

**November 15<sup>th</sup> -  
November 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Northeast  
PTA  
Pancake  
Breakfast**

**November 18<sup>th</sup>  
9:00am –  
11:00am**

**Northeast  
PTA  
Book Fair  
(evening)**

**November 16<sup>th</sup>  
3:00pm -7:00pm**