

DASD: Permission to Conduct Research (235.1)

To: Dallastown Area School District Board of Directors

From: Ms. Christine D. Linden

Academic Intervention Specialist, Dallastown and York Township Elementary Schools

Graduate and Professional Studies, York College of Pennsylvania

Estimated Study Date(s): December 2026 - March 2027

Board Information Item: November 19, 2026

Board Action Item: December 3, 2026

Subject: Demonstrating Reading Comprehension Following a Cold Read: Examining the Role of Organizational Supports in Independent Oral Retells

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Procedures

The following procedures will be employed through written notification to parents/guardians and students of eligible student participants in 3rd grade at York Township Elementary School, including the following:

1. Policy 235.1 is available in the DASD Policy Manual.
2. Survey Instruments - “This study does not use a traditional survey instrument. Therefore, the requirement for a minimum of 20 survey items, including demographic items, does not apply to the proposed research design. Instead, qualitative data will be collected through individual cold-read oral retell assessments administered at three points during an approximately 12-week intervention period: pre-assessment, midpoint assessment, and post-assessment. The same assessment procedures and scoring criteria will be used at all three assessment periods.”
3. No student-identifiable information will be utilized for the study.

4. Assessments completion time: “Each student will participate in an individual cold-read assessment during the intervention assessment period (pre, mid, post). During each assessment, the student will independently read a grade-level passage that has not previously been read or discussed for one minute and provide one independent oral retell without access to an organizational support. Each assessment session is expected to take approximately 3-4 minutes per student, including directions and assessment.”
5. Parent/guardian may opt their student out of participation in the study as provided in this policy prior and/or during the study.
6. Parent/guardian may request to review the research tools prior to and during the timeframe of the study.

Communication Timeline

- November 19, 2026: Board Information Item
- December 3, 2026: Board Action Item
- December 10, 2026: Parent/Guardian Communication (Eligible Participants Only)
- December 10, 2026 - March 30, 2027 (Estimated): Conduct Study (Data from Concentrated Participants Only)

Attachments: Project Proposal, Instrument Protocol, Parental Consent, Student Assessment Form, and ARC Teacher Implementation Guide.

Attachments:

Project Proposal (Page 1)
Instrument Protocol (Page 21)
Parental Consent (Page 26)
Student Assessment Form (Page 29)
ARC Teacher Implementation Guide (Page 31)

Demonstrating Reading Comprehension Following a Cold Read: Examining the Role of Organizational Supports in Independent Oral Retells

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Demonstrating Reading Comprehension Following a Cold Read: Examining the Role of Organizational Supports in Independent Oral Retells

Reading is the foundation of learning across academic disciplines and serves as a primary means through which students acquire, integrate, and apply new knowledge (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). In recent years, widespread literacy reform driven by the Science of Reading has reshaped reading instruction by emphasizing evidence-based practices grounded in decades of interdisciplinary research (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Hoover & Tunmer, 2022). Although the Science of Reading represents a broad body of research examining the processes involved in skilled reading, including word recognition, language comprehension, and the many component skills that contribute to successful reading outcomes (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Hoover & Tunmer, 2022), much of the recent attention has centered on explicit, systematic phonics instruction. While accurate word recognition is essential, research continues to emphasize that successful reading ultimately depends on students' ability to construct meaning from text (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Hoover & Tunmer, 2022; Scarborough, 2001). Contemporary theories of reading describe comprehension as an active process requiring readers to integrate textual information with prior knowledge while coordinating linguistic, cognitive, and strategic processes (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Consequently, improving reading outcomes requires attention not only to how students learn to read but also to how educators determine whether students truly understand what they have read.

Reading comprehension remains an area of national concern. Results from the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate that fourth-grade reading achievement continues to remain below pre-pandemic levels, highlighting the need for instructional and assessment practices that accurately identify students' strengths and areas of need (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024). Because comprehension is an internal cognitive process, educators must rely on observable evidence to determine what students understand from text. The validity of instructional decisions therefore depends not only on students' comprehension but also on the extent to which assessment methods accurately capture that understanding (Pearson & Hamm, 2005).

Classroom teachers use a variety of assessment formats to evaluate reading comprehension, including teacher questioning, written responses, teacher-prompted recalls/cued responses, and independent oral retells. Although each format is intended to provide evidence of students' understanding, they differ in the degree of support they provide during the response process. Independent oral retells require students to generate and organize their own responses, whereas teacher-prompted questioning provides external cues that guide retrieval and communication. Therefore, students who demonstrate strong understanding during supported discussions may experience greater difficulty when asked to independently communicate what they know. These differences raise important questions about whether assessment outcomes reflect students' comprehension alone or are also influenced by the demands associated with the response format.

Contemporary theories of reading increasingly recognize that successful comprehension depends on the coordination of multiple cognitive systems beyond decoding and language comprehension. The Active View of Reading, for example, identifies executive functioning as an essential contributor to reading comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). These executive processes also support students as they demonstrate comprehension. During an independent oral retell, students must retrieve information from memory, determine which ideas are most important, organize those ideas into a coherent response, monitor the completeness of their explanation, and communicate their understanding using oral language. Research has demonstrated that executive functioning contributes uniquely to reading comprehension after accounting for foundational reading skills (Cain et al., 2004; Nouwens et al., 2021; Sesma et al., 2009). Consequently, performance on independent oral retells may reflect students' ability to coordinate these cognitive processes in addition to what they understood while reading.

Independent oral retell has been widely recognized as a valid measure of reading comprehension because it requires students to reconstruct meaning using their own language rather than recognize isolated pieces of information (Cao & Kim, 2021; Reed et al., 2012). However, research also indicates that retell performance is influenced by language production, memory, discourse organization, and executive functioning (Cao & Kim, 2021; Kim, 2023). As a result, lower retell performance may not

necessarily indicate weaker comprehension but may instead reflect difficulty organizing and communicating understanding in an unsupported context.

If organizational demands influence students' ability to demonstrate what they know, reducing those demands may provide a more accurate representation of their reading comprehension. One instructional approach for reducing these additional demands involves providing organizational supports before students independently communicate their understanding. Graphic organizers and similar organizational scaffolds have consistently been shown to improve students' comprehension and organization of information during supported instructional activities (Dexter & Hughes, 2011; Griffin et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2004; Ponce et al., 2025). By externalizing aspects of planning and organization, these supports may reduce cognitive load while allowing students to focus more fully on expressing their understanding. Although the effectiveness of organizational supports during instruction is well established (Dexter & Hughes, 2011; Griffin et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2004; Ponce et al., 2025), considerably less is known about whether they improve students' ability to independently demonstrate comprehension after a cold read when those external supports are removed.

This gap has important implications for literacy assessment and instructional decision-making. If assessment performance reflects organizational demands in addition to reading comprehension, educators may underestimate students' understanding and make instructional or intervention decisions based on incomplete evidence. Examining whether organizational supports improve students' ability to independently demonstrate reading comprehension may provide valuable information for classroom teachers, reading specialists, interventionists, and other educators responsible for selecting assessments and planning instruction. To address this gap, the present study examines whether organizational supports improve third-grade students' demonstrated reading comprehension during independent oral retells following a cold read.

The study will address the following research questions:

RQ1:Is there a difference in demonstrated reading comprehension during independent oral retells between students who receive organizational supports and students who do not receive organizational supports following a cold read?

RQ2: How does demonstrated reading comprehension during independent oral retells change over time for students who receive organizational supports?

Literature Review

Reading Comprehension as a Complex Construct

Reading comprehension is the primary goal of reading and serves as the foundation for learning across academic disciplines. As students progress through school, they increasingly rely on reading to acquire, integrate, and apply knowledge in different content areas. Therefore, understanding how students construct meaning from text has remained a central focus of literacy research (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Hoover & Tunmer, 2022; Scarborough, 2001). Although early theories emphasized foundational reading skills, contemporary perspectives recognize reading comprehension as a dynamic process requiring the coordination of linguistic, cognitive, and strategic processes (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

The evolution of theoretical models illustrates this expanding understanding of reading comprehension. The Simple View of Reading proposed that reading comprehension is the product of decoding and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990). Scarborough's (2001) Reading Rope expanded this framework by illustrating that both word recognition and language comprehension consist of multiple interacting skills that develop over time. More recently, Duke and Cartwright's (2021) Active View of Reading extended previous models by recognizing the importance of executive functioning, self-regulation, strategic processing, motivation, and engagement during comprehension.

Among these theoretical perspectives, the Active View of Reading provides the strongest conceptual foundation for the present study because it recognizes that executive functioning contributes to both the construction and demonstration of meaning from text (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). This

perspective suggests that differences in students' demonstrated comprehension may reflect not only what they understand while reading but also the cognitive demands associated with communicating that understanding.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives demonstrate that reading comprehension extends beyond accurate word recognition and language understanding. Instead, comprehension represents an active, multidimensional process in which readers integrate linguistic knowledge, cognitive resources, strategic processing, and prior experiences to construct meaning. This broader conceptualization provides an important foundation for understanding how reading comprehension should be assessed.

Assessing Reading Comprehension

Assessment plays a central role in literacy instruction by informing instructional planning, identifying students requiring intervention, monitoring progress, and evaluating instructional effectiveness (Pearson & Hamm, 2005). Because these decisions rely on students' assessment performance, it is important to consider whether assessment methods accurately represent students' comprehension.

Historically, reading comprehension assessments focused primarily on recall of textual information through multiple-choice questions or other selected-response formats. Although these assessments provide efficient and reliable measures of performance, researchers have increasingly argued that no single assessment can adequately capture the complexity of comprehension (Pearson & Hamm, 2005). As theoretical understandings of reading evolved, expectations for assessment likewise expanded. Contemporary perspectives emphasize that assessments should capture students' ability to construct meaning, integrate ideas, generate inferences, monitor understanding, and communicate their thinking rather than simply recognize correct answers (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Sabatini & O'Reilly, 2013).

Therefore, selecting an assessment involves more than choosing an efficient measure. Educators must also consider whether the response format influences how students demonstrate their comprehension. This consideration is particularly important when comparing oral response formats that vary in the amount of organizational support they provide.

Response Formats for Demonstrating Reading Comprehension

Among the response formats commonly used in elementary literacy instruction, oral assessments provide particularly rich information about students' thinking because they require students to generate responses using their own language rather than recognize information from predetermined choices. Oral response formats require students to retrieve information from memory, organize ideas, explain relationships among concepts, and communicate their understanding coherently. Additionally, they often provide greater insight into students' comprehension processes than selected-response assessments while simultaneously placing greater cognitive and linguistic demands on students (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Pearson & Hamm, 2005).

Independent oral retell has received considerable attention as a measure of reading comprehension because it requires students to reconstruct a text in their own words after reading. Rather than recalling isolated facts, students must determine which ideas are most important, organize those ideas into a coherent representation of the text, and communicate their understanding through oral language. Research supports the validity of retell as an indicator of reading comprehension while recognizing that performance reflects more than comprehension alone (Cao & Kim, 2021; Kim, 2023; Reed et. al, 2012). In their systematic review, Cao and Kim (2021) concluded that retell demonstrates strong evidence of validity but represents a multidimensional construct influenced by language proficiency, memory, discourse organization, and executive functioning. Similarly, Kim (2023) found that students' narrative and expository retells were shaped by both language abilities and cognitive processes, particularly their ability to organize ideas, maintain coherence, and communicate information effectively. Reed et al. (2012) likewise reported significant relationships between holistically scored retells and established measures of reading comprehension while acknowledging that students' ability to organize and communicate information contributed to performance. Together, these findings suggest that independent retell provides meaningful evidence of comprehension while simultaneously reflecting the cognitive and linguistic demands involved in demonstrating that understanding.

In contrast, teacher-prompted recall provides greater organizational support during the response process. Through guided questioning, teachers direct students' attention to specific aspects of a text and provide cues that support retrieval and elaboration. Rather than independently determining how to organize a response, students respond to questions that structure the conversation and reduce some of the organizational demands associated with recalling information. Although relatively little research has examined teacher-prompted recall as a distinct assessment format, studies of guided oral responses suggest that teacher questioning facilitates students' retrieval and communication of ideas by providing external organizational support (Wilson et al., 1985).

Comparing independent oral retell with teacher-prompted recall highlights an important consideration for reading comprehension assessment. Although both formats are intended to measure students' understanding of text, they differ substantially in the amount of organizational support provided during the response process. Accordingly, differences in assessment performance may reflect not only what students understood while reading but also the cognitive and organizational demands associated with demonstrating that understanding. This distinction provides an important foundation for the present study, which examines whether organizational supports can help students more accurately demonstrate their comprehension during independent oral retells following a cold read.

Cognitive and Linguistic Demands of Demonstrating Reading Comprehension

Language production and executive functioning are two key processes that influence students' ability to demonstrate reading comprehension during oral response tasks (Cartwright, 2012; Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Understanding the contribution of these processes is particularly important when interpreting students' performance on independent oral retells, where students must communicate their understanding without external guidance.

Language plays a central role in students' ability to demonstrate comprehension. Oral response formats require students to express their understanding using appropriate vocabulary, sentence structure, discourse organization, and coherent spoken language. Even when students have successfully constructed meaning from a text, they must translate that understanding into language that is understandable to a

listener. Research examining oral retell consistently demonstrates that discourse production, language proficiency, and oral language skills contribute substantially to students' performance (Cao & Kim, 2021; Kim, 2023). These findings suggest that variation in oral responses may reflect students' language production as well as their comprehension.

Executive functioning likewise contributes to students' ability to demonstrate what they know. Within the Active View of Reading, executive functioning encompasses higher-order cognitive processes that support readers as they coordinate multiple sources of information during comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). These same processes continue to operate after reading as students retrieve information, determine what is most important, organize their responses, and monitor whether their explanations accurately represent their understanding. Empirical evidence supports this relationship. Cain et al. (2004) found that working memory contributed uniquely to children's reading comprehension beyond decoding and verbal ability. Similarly, Sesma et al. (2009) reported that planning, organization, and cognitive flexibility made significant contributions to reading comprehension, particularly during tasks requiring integration of ideas and higher-order reasoning. More recently, Nouwens et al. (2021) demonstrated that executive functioning explained unique variance in reading comprehension even after accounting for decoding and language skills, reinforcing the view that comprehension depends upon coordinated cognitive processes rather than isolated literacy skills. These cognitive and linguistic demands are especially relevant during independent oral retells.

Collectively, this body of research suggests that students' performance on independent oral retells reflects both their understanding of text and the cognitive and linguistic processes required to communicate that understanding. This distinction provides a strong rationale for the present study, which examines whether organizational supports can help students more accurately demonstrate their comprehension during independent oral retells following a cold read.

Instructional Supports for Demonstrating Comprehension

The research reviewed thus far suggests that students' ability to demonstrate reading comprehension depends not only on constructing meaning from text but also on successfully coordinating

the cognitive and organizational processes required to communicate that understanding. If independent oral retells place substantial demands on retrieval, planning, sequencing, and oral language production, instructional supports that externalize aspects of these processes may enable students to demonstrate their comprehension more effectively. Rather than reducing the complexity of the reading task, such supports are intended to make the organizational demands of responding more manageable while preserving the cognitive work involved in constructing meaning (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

Among the instructional supports used in literacy instruction, graphic organizers have received considerable empirical attention (Dexter & Hughes, 2011; Griffin et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2004). Graphic organizers provide visual frameworks that help students identify important ideas, recognize relationships among concepts, and organize information before communicating their understanding. By externalizing part of the planning process, graphic organizers reduce the need for students to simultaneously determine what information is important, organize ideas into a coherent structure, and formulate a response. Instead, students are provided with a framework that supports organization while allowing them to focus their cognitive resources on understanding and communicating meaning.

A substantial body of research supports the effectiveness of graphic organizers for improving students' reading comprehension and helping them organize information from text (Dexter & Hughes, 2011; Griffin et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2004; Ponce et al., 2025). In a recent meta-analysis, Ponce et al. (2025) found that both instructor-provided and learner-generated graphic organizers produced significant improvements in students' comprehension and memory compared with reading text alone. Although the degree of teacher support differed between the two approaches, both forms of organizational scaffolding promoted learning, suggesting that providing structure for organizing information facilitates students' construction of meaning. Importantly, the authors concluded that students often require explicit instruction and repeated opportunities to develop independent organizational strategies and called for additional experimental research examining how different forms of scaffolding influence learning.

Earlier empirical studies reached similar conclusions (Dexter & Hughes, 2011; Griffin et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2004). Griffin et al. (1995) reported that students receiving explicit instruction in

graphic organizers demonstrated stronger reading comprehension and more effective organization of textual information than students receiving traditional instruction. Likewise, Kim et al. (2004) and Dexter and Hughes (2011) concluded that graphic organizers are effective instructional supports across a variety of learners and instructional settings. Collectively, these findings indicate that organizational supports can strengthen students' ability to identify key ideas, recognize relationships among concepts, and communicate their understanding during literacy instruction.

Although the instructional benefits of graphic organizers are well established, considerably less research has examined whether students transfer these organizational processes to situations requiring independent demonstrations of comprehension. Most existing studies evaluate performance while organizational supports remain available during instruction or assessment. Consequently, it is unclear whether students internalize these strategies sufficiently to organize and communicate their understanding when external supports are removed.

This distinction is particularly important for independent oral retells following a cold read. Students who perform successfully while using organizational supports may experience difficulty independently coordinating these same processes when supports are no longer available. As a result, assessment outcomes may underestimate students' comprehension by reflecting differences in organizational abilities rather than differences in understanding of the text itself.

The existing literature therefore identifies an important gap. While substantial evidence demonstrates that organizational supports improve learning and supported demonstrations of comprehension, relatively little is known about whether these supports improve students' ability to independently demonstrate comprehension during oral retells following a cold read. Likewise, limited research has examined whether repeated use of organizational supports promotes greater independence over time as students internalize organizational strategies for communicating their understanding.

Taken together, the literature suggests that independent oral retells require students to coordinate cognitive, linguistic, and organizational processes beyond constructing meaning from text. Although organizational supports have consistently been shown to improve students' performance during supported

instructional activities, little research has examined whether these supports improve students' ability to independently demonstrate reading comprehension following a cold read. The present study addresses this gap by comparing the independent oral retell performance of third-grade students who receive organizational supports with that of students who do not receive these supports. In addition, the study will examine changes in students' demonstrated reading comprehension over time across three assessment periods.

It is hypothesized that third-grade students who receive organizational supports will demonstrate significantly higher independent oral retell comprehension scores than students who do not receive organizational supports following a cold read. In addition, students who receive organizational supports will demonstrate significant improvement in independent oral retell performance over the course of the intervention.

Methodology Overview

Research Design

This study will employ a quantitative, quasi-experimental research design to examine the effects of organizational supports on third-grade students' demonstrated reading comprehension during independent oral retells following a cold read. A quantitative approach is appropriate because the purpose of the study is to determine whether statistically significant differences exist in students' demonstrated comprehension based on the use of organizational supports. A quasi-experimental design was selected because students will participate in their existing classroom groups rather than being randomly assigned to treatment conditions, preserving the natural instructional setting while allowing for comparison between intervention and comparison groups.

The study will compare students who receive explicit organizational supports with students who participate in typical classroom instruction without those supports. In addition to comparing group performance, the study will examine changes in demonstrated reading comprehension over time among students receiving the intervention to determine whether repeated exposure to organizational supports promotes greater independence in communicating comprehension.

Participants and Setting

Participants will consist of two third-grade classrooms from York Township Elementary School (YTES), a public elementary school within the Dallastown Area School District in Dallastown, Pennsylvania. Third grade was selected because students at this grade level have typically developed foundational reading skills and are expected to apply those skills to independently comprehend and communicate meaning from increasingly complex grade-level texts. Both classrooms implement the district's core literacy curriculum and use heterogeneous classroom placement practices designed to balance classrooms by factors such as gender and academic ability. These similarities provide comparable instructional contexts while allowing the study to examine the influence of organizational supports across multiple classroom settings. Participants will include approximately 30 students receiving general education reading instruction across the two participating classrooms.

A convenience sample will be used because the study will be conducted in the two available third-grade classrooms at YTES. Because instruction will occur within existing classrooms, random assignment of individual students will not be feasible. Appropriate district and Institutional Review Board approvals will be obtained prior to data collection, and parental consent and student assent will be secured before participation.

Procedures

Prior to implementation, the teacher in the intervention group will participate in professional learning designed to promote consistent implementation of the organizational-support intervention across classrooms. Training will address the purpose of the intervention, procedures for explicitly modeling and teaching the organizational supports, assessment training and procedures, expectations for implementation, and methods for documenting fidelity of implementation. The teacher in the comparison group will also participate in training, which will include the purpose of the study, assessment procedures, and assessment training

Students in the intervention group will receive explicit instruction in using organizational supports designed to help them identify the main idea, organize important information, sequence ideas

logically, and communicate their understanding of text. Two organizational supports will be used throughout the study: one designed for narrative (fiction) texts and one designed for informational (nonfiction) texts. The teacher will explicitly model the use of each organizational support, provide guided practice, and gradually release responsibility as students become more proficient in applying them independently. Throughout the intervention period, the teacher will incorporate the appropriate organizational support into regular reading instruction using both narrative and informational texts. Students will use the organizational supports during reading instruction to organize their thinking after reading by recording key information on the graphic organizer before orally retelling the text. The teacher will provide ongoing modeling, guided practice, and feedback to promote students' independent application and eventual internalization of the organizational strategies.

However, students will not use the organizational supports during the formal assessment sessions. Instead, the intervention is intended to help students internalize organizational strategies so they can independently organize and communicate their understanding during oral retells. Students in the comparison group will continue to receive typical classroom reading instruction without the additional organizational-support intervention.

Formal data collection will occur during three assessment periods across the 12 weeks: before the intervention (pretest), midway through the intervention (midtest), and following completion of the intervention (posttest). During each assessment session, students in both groups will read the same Acadience Reading Progress Monitoring grade-level passage that has not been previously read, taught, or discussed, thereby maintaining a cold-read context.

Depending on the assessment schedule, students will read either a fiction or informational passage that corresponds to the organizational support taught during instruction. Following each cold-read passage, students in both groups will complete one independent oral retell without access to organizational supports or other instructional aids. Oral retells will be evaluated for both quality and quantity using standardized scoring procedures. Oral retell performance will be evaluated using two measures: retell quality and retell quantity. Retell quality will be scored using a four-point holistic rubric.

Retell quantity will be measured by recording the amount of passage-related information communicated during each oral retell. Because neither group will use organizational supports during the assessment sessions, any differences in oral retell performance over time may reflect the extent to which students in the intervention group have internalized and transferred the organizational strategies learned during instruction.

Data Collection

Data will be collected through students' independent oral retells completed during the three formal assessment periods: pretest, midtest, and posttest. At each assessment period, students in both the intervention and comparison groups will complete one unsupported oral retell following a cold-read passage. These retells will serve as the primary source of data used to evaluate changes in students' demonstrated reading comprehension over the course of the study.

The primary outcome measure will be oral retell quality, evaluated using a holistic four-point rubric from the Acadience Reading retell rubric. The rubric will assess students' ability to communicate the overall meaning of the text, including the completeness, organization, coherence, and accuracy of the retell. A score of four (4) will indicate a complete and well-organized retell that communicates the main idea and at least three supporting details in a logical sequence. A score of three (3) will reflect a generally complete retell that includes at least three ideas in a meaningful sequence. A score of two (2) will represent a partial retell that includes two or more details but lacks completeness, organization, or coherence. A score of one (1) will indicate a limited or fragmented retell that communicates two or fewer details and provides little evidence of overall understanding.

Retell quantity will serve as the secondary outcome measure and will be determined by recording the amount of passage-related information communicated during each oral retell. Examining retell quality and quantity separately will allow the researcher to determine whether the intervention influences the quality of students' demonstrated comprehension, the amount of relevant information they communicate, or both.

Scores obtained across the three assessment periods will be used to examine changes in retell quality and quantity within the intervention group from pretest to posttest and to compare changes between the intervention and comparison groups over time. These analyses will determine whether sustained instruction and practice with organizational supports result in greater improvements in students' independent oral retell performance following a cold read.

All oral retells will be administered and scored using standardized procedures. Individuals responsible for scoring will receive training on the administration and scoring protocols to promote consistency across assessment periods. Fidelity of assessment administration will be monitored throughout the study, while fidelity of intervention implementation will be documented separately through teacher implementation checklists and periodic classroom observations.

Significance of the Study

Reading comprehension assessment informs many of the instructional decisions made in elementary classrooms. Teachers use assessment results to identify students' strengths and areas of need, monitor progress, determine intervention services, evaluate instructional effectiveness, and make decisions within multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). Because these decisions are based on students' demonstrated performance, it is essential that assessment methods accurately reflect what students know and understand.

The literature suggests that independent oral retells provide meaningful evidence of reading comprehension while simultaneously requiring students to coordinate executive functioning, language production, memory, retrieval, and organizational processes. Consequently, lower performance on an independent oral retell may not necessarily indicate weaker comprehension but instead may reflect difficulty organizing and communicating understanding. Although organizational supports have consistently been shown to improve learning and supported demonstrations of comprehension, relatively little research has examined whether these supports improve students' ability to independently demonstrate comprehension following a cold read.

This study has the potential to contribute to both literacy research and educational practice. From a research perspective, the study extends the current literature by examining demonstrated reading comprehension as a construct influenced not only by students' understanding of text but also by the cognitive demands associated with communicating that understanding. Examining the role of organizational supports may provide additional insight into how assessment formats influence student performance and may help clarify whether independent oral retells capture comprehension alone or a broader combination of cognitive and linguistic processes.

From a practical perspective, the findings may assist classroom teachers, reading specialists, interventionists, literacy coaches, school psychologists, and school leaders in selecting assessment practices that more accurately represent students' comprehension. If instruction in organizational supports enables students to more effectively organize and communicate their understanding during independent oral retells, educators may obtain more valid evidence of students' reading comprehension when making instructional decisions. More accurate assessment data have the potential to improve instructional planning, strengthen intervention decisions, support more effective implementation of MTSS, and reduce the likelihood of instructional or referral decisions based on an incomplete representation of students' understanding.

Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of demonstrated reading comprehension by examining how organizational supports influence students' ability to independently communicate what they know following a cold read. By distinguishing between students' comprehension of text and their ability to demonstrate that comprehension during assessment, the findings may help educators make more informed, equitable, and instructionally meaningful decisions that better reflect students' true understanding.

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Demonstrating Reading Comprehension Following a Cold Read: Examining the Role of Organizational Supports in Independent Oral Retells

1. Hypotheses the Project Addresses

H1: Students receiving explicit instruction in organizational supports will demonstrate greater growth in independent oral retell performance, as measured by retell quality, across the intervention period than students receiving typical reading instruction.

H2: Students receiving explicit instruction in organizational supports will demonstrate greater growth in independent oral retell performance, as measured by retell quantity, across the intervention period than students receiving typical reading instruction.

H3: Students receiving explicit instruction in organizational supports will demonstrate improvement in independent oral retell performance, as measured by retell quality and quantity, across the pre-assessment, midpoint, and post-assessment when organizational supports are not available during assessment.

2. Estimated Completion Time

Each student will participate in an individual cold-read assessment during the intervention assessment period (pre, mid, post). During each assessment, the student will independently read a grade-level passage that has not previously been read or discussed for one minute and provide one independent oral retell without access to an organizational support. Each assessment session is expected to take approximately 3-4 minutes per student, including directions and assessment.

3. Consent Form/Assent Form

Parental Consent Form

Student Assent Form

4. Survey Instruments

This study does not use a traditional survey instrument. Therefore, the requirement for a minimum of 20 survey items, including demographic items, does not apply to the proposed research design. Instead, quantitative data will be collected through individual cold-read oral retell assessments administered at three points during an approximately 6–8 week intervention period: pre-assessment, midpoint assessment, and post-assessment. The same assessment procedures and scoring criteria will be used at all three assessment periods.

During each assessment, students will independently read a grade-level passage for one minute that has not previously been read or discussed. Following the reading, each student will provide one independent oral retell of the passage. Students in both the intervention and comparison groups will complete the assessment without access to a graphic organizer or other organizational support. This procedure is intended to determine whether students who receive explicit instruction in organizational supports demonstrate greater growth in their ability to independently organize and communicate their understanding of text compared with students receiving typical reading instruction.

Two quantitative outcomes will be collected from each oral retell: **r**etell quantity and retell quality. Both measures originate from the Acadience Reading K–6 Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and Retell assessment.

Retell Quantity. Retell quantity will be measured using Acadience Retell scoring procedures. Students receive credit for words communicated during the oral retell that are related to the passage (one point for each word). Repeated information and information unrelated to the passage are not included in the score. The resulting score represents the amount of passage-related information the student is able to communicate following the cold read (Acadience Learning, 2020).

Retell Quality. Retell quality will be measured using the Acadience Retell Quality of Response Rubric. The rubric assigns a score ranging from 1 to 4 based on the number of relevant details included in the retell, whether details are presented in a meaningful sequence, and whether the retell captures a main idea. The published rubric will be used in its original form (Acadience Learning, 2020).

Rating	Retell Quality of Response
1	Provides 2 or fewer details
2	Provides 3 or more details
3	Provides 3 or more details in a meaningful sequence
4	Provides 3 or more details in a meaningful sequence that captures a main idea

Acadience provides evidence of reliability for the ORF Retell measure. The *Acadience Reading K–6 Technical Manual* reports an inter-rater reliability coefficient of .92 for the third-grade ORF Retell measure using beginning-of-year Study C data (n = 24). Across Grades 2–6, reported inter-rater reliability coefficients for ORF Retell ranged from .92 to .99, indicating a high level of consistency in scoring across assessors (Acadience Learning, 2026).

Because this study uses a performance-based reading assessment rather than a survey, individual survey items and thematic survey sections are not applicable. Instead, retell quantity and retell quality will be measured at pre-assessment, midpoint, and post-assessment to examine patterns of student growth across the 6–8 week intervention period and differences in growth between the intervention and comparison groups.

5. Construct a mapping table, connecting specific variables to hypotheses

Because this study uses a performance-based assessment rather than a survey instrument, the hypotheses are linked to the specific measures used to assess independent oral retell performance rather than to individual survey questions. Independent oral retell performance will be measured through retell quality and retell quantity at three assessment points: pre-assessment, midpoint, and post-assessment.

Hypothesis	Variable/Measure	Instrument/Scoring Criteria

H1: Students receiving explicit instruction in organizational supports will demonstrate greater growth in independent oral retell quality across the intervention period than students receiving typical reading instruction.	Independent oral retell quality	Acadience Retell Quality of Response Rubric: Quality of the student's oral retell is scored on a 1–4 scale based on the number of relevant details provided, whether details are presented in a meaningful sequence, and whether the retell captures a main idea. Quality scores will be collected at pre-assessment, midpoint, and post-assessment for both the intervention and comparison groups.
H2: Students receiving explicit instruction in organizational supports will demonstrate greater growth in independent oral retell quantity across the intervention period than students receiving typical reading instruction.	Independent oral retell quantity	Acadience Retell Quantity Score: Quantity is measured by the number of passage-related words communicated during the student's independent oral retell. Quantity scores will be collected at pre-assessment, midpoint, and post-assessment for both the intervention and comparison groups.
H3: Students receiving explicit instruction in organizational supports will demonstrate improvement in independent oral retell quality and quantity across the pre-assessment, midpoint, and post-assessment when organizational supports are not available during assessment.	Independent oral retell performance: quality and quantity	Acadience Retell Quality of Response Rubric and Retell Quantity Score: Quality scores (1–4) and quantity scores (the number of passage-related words) will be examined across pre-assessment, midpoint, and post-assessment within the intervention group. Organizational supports will not be available during any of the three assessments.
Note. Organizational supports will be used during instruction with the intervention group but will not be available during the pre-assessment, midpoint, or post-assessment. H1 and H2 examine differences in growth between the intervention and comparison groups, while H3 examines changes in independent oral retell performance within the intervention group across the intervention period.		

References

Acadience Learning. (2020). *Acadience Reading K–6 assessment manual*.

Acadience Learning. (2026). *Acadience Reading K–6 technical manual*.

Parental Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Christine Linden
Study Title: *Demonstrating Reading Comprehension Following a Cold Read: Examining the Role of Organizational Supports in Independent Oral Retells*

Introduction
Your child is invited to participate in a research study examining how third-grade students demonstrate reading comprehension through independent oral retells. Specifically, this study will examine whether instruction in organizational strategies, such as graphic organizers, helps students organize and communicate their understanding of a text when independently retelling what they have read.

Your child's participation is entirely voluntary, which means you may choose whether or not your child participates. Before you make a decision, you will need to know the purpose of the study, what your child will be asked to do, and the possible risks and benefits of participating.

Why is this study being done?
This study is being conducted to learn more about how organizational supports used during reading instruction may influence students' ability to independently communicate their understanding of a text. Students may understand what they read but experience difficulty organizing and communicating that understanding during an independent oral retell.

The information gathered through this study may help educators better understand the demands associated with oral retell assessments and how instructional strategies that support organization may help students demonstrate their reading comprehension.

What are the study procedures? What will my child be asked to do?
If you agree to allow your child to participate, your child will continue to participate in regular classroom reading instruction. Depending on the classroom, instruction will either include explicit teaching and practice with organizational supports, such as graphic organizers, or typical reading instruction.

Students in classrooms receiving the organizational-support instruction will learn how to use organizational strategies with both narrative and informational texts as part of reading instruction. These strategies will be modeled by the teacher and practiced by students throughout the study. Students in the comparison classrooms will continue to receive their typical reading instruction.

Participating students will also complete an individual reading assessment during three assessment periods. During each assessment, your child will independently read a grade-level passage that has not previously been read or discussed. After reading the passage for one minute, your child will be asked to orally retell what was read. Students will not use a graphic organizer or other organizational support during these assessments.

Each individual assessment is expected to take approximately 3-4 minutes. Students' oral retells will be evaluated for the amount of relevant information communicated and the overall quality and organization of the retell.

What other options are there?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to allow your child to participate in the research study. Choosing not to participate will not affect your child's grades, educational services, classroom placement, or relationship with the school, school district, or York College of Pennsylvania.

What are the risks or inconveniences of the study?
This study involves minimal risk. The reading activities and organizational strategies used during instruction are similar to activities students may encounter as part of typical classroom reading instruction.

A possible inconvenience may be the additional time required for students to complete the individual reading assessments. Some students may also experience mild frustration or discomfort when independently reading or retelling a passage. Students may stop participating in an assessment if they become uncomfortable and may discontinue participation in the study at any time without penalty.

What are the benefits of the study?
Your child may or may not directly benefit from participating in this research. Students receiving instruction in organizational strategies may benefit from additional practice organizing and communicating information from texts.

More broadly, findings from this study may help educators better understand how organizational demands influence students' ability to demonstrate reading comprehension through independent oral retells. The results may also contribute to decisions about instructional practices and the interpretation of reading assessment data.

Will I receive payment for participation? Are there costs to participate?
There is no payment for participation in this study. There are no fees or costs associated with participation.

How will my child's personal information be protected?
Information collected for this study will be kept confidential to the extent possible. Student names will be replaced with identification codes in the research data. Identifying information will be kept separate from assessment data.

Electronic research data will be stored in password-protected files and on a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher and other authorized individuals, as required. Findings from this study may be presented or published; however, results will be reported in summary or aggregate form, and individual students will not be identified in publications or presentations.

We will do our best to protect the confidentiality of the information gathered from your child, but we cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality. You should also know that the York College of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board (IRB) may inspect study records as part of its auditing program, but these reviews will focus on the research procedures and protection of participants. The IRB reviews research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Can my child stop being in the study and what are our rights?
Your child does not have to participate in this study. If you agree to allow your child to participate but later change your mind, you may withdraw your child from the study at any time without penalty or consequence.

Your child will also be informed that participation is voluntary and that they may stop participating in an assessment at any time. A decision not to participate or to discontinue participation will not affect your child's grades, educational services, or relationship with school personnel.

Whom do I contact if I have questions about the study?
Take as long as you need before making a decision. We will be happy to answer any questions you have about this study.

If you have questions about the study or experience a research-related concern, you may contact the principal investigator:

Christine Linden
CLinden@ycp.edu
Christine.Linden@Dallastown.net

If you have questions concerning your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact the York College of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board (IRB) at **irb@ycp.edu**.

If you have any questions or there is something you do not understand, please ask. You may keep a copy of this permission document for your records.

Parent/Guardian Permission
I have read this form and understand the general purpose of the research study, what my child will be asked to do, and the possible risks and inconveniences associated with participation. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my child from the study at any time without penalty or consequence.

By signing below, I give permission for my child to participate in the research study described above.

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student Assent Form

Researcher: Christine Linden
Study Title: *Demonstrating Reading Comprehension Following a Cold Read: Examining the Role of Organizational Supports in Independent Oral Retells*

What is this study about?
I am doing a study to learn more about how third-grade students understand and talk about what they read. I want to learn whether practicing ways to organize information while reading can help students explain what they have read.

What will I do?
If you choose to be part of the study, you will continue to take part in your regular reading lessons at school.

Three times during the school year, you will meet individually with your teacher for a reading activity. You will:

- Read a passage that you have not read before for one minute.
- Tell what you remember and understand about the passage in your own words.

Each reading activity will take about **3-4 minutes**.

There are no right or wrong ways to tell what you remember. Just do your best to explain what you understood from the passage.

Do I have to participate?
No. Being part of this study is your choice.

Your parent or guardian may give permission for you to participate, but you can still decide that you do not want to participate. You can also change your mind at any time.

If you decide not to participate or want to stop, you will not get in trouble. It will not affect your grades, your classes, or the help you receive at school.

Could anything make me uncomfortable?
The reading activities will be similar to other reading activities you do at school. You might find some parts of a passage difficult or feel unsure about what to say. That is okay.

If you feel uncomfortable or want to stop, you can tell the adult working with you.

Will this help me?
Being in the study may or may not help you directly. What I learn from the study may help teachers better understand how students show what they know about something they have read.

Who will know what I say?
Your information will be kept private as much as possible. Your name will not be used when the results of the study are shared. Instead, a code will be used with your information.

What if I have questions?
You can ask questions about the study at any time. If there is something you do not understand, please ask before deciding whether you want to participate.

My Choice
I have learned about this study and had a chance to ask questions.

Please check one:

☐ **YES, I want to be part of this study.**

☐ **NO, I do not want to be part of this study.**

Student Name: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Teacher Implementation Guide

ARC | Graphic Organizer Instruction During Third-Grade Core Reading

Setting	Schedule	Assessment
Core reading instruction	Approximately 3 sessions/week, 10–15 minutes each; two 6-instructional-week periods	Narrative cold-read oral retell at pre, mid, post; no organizer or instructional prompts

Purpose

Teach students to select, organize, and orally communicate important text information. The instructional goal is to internalize organizational strategies, not merely complete a graphic organizer.

Two Consistent Organizers

Narrative: Who? Where? Beginning, Middle, End (including the central problem and resolution within the sequence).

Informational: Main Idea and three Key Details (details should connect to the main idea).

Five-Step Instructional Routine

Step	Teacher action
1. Read	Use a narrative or informational selection from existing core instruction.
2. Model	Think aloud about selecting important information rather than minor details.
3. Organize	Complete the appropriate organizer using keywords or short phrases.
4. Retell	Have students orally communicate the important information, initially with the organizer.
5. Release	Over successive lessons, fade modeling, prompts, and access to the organizer.

Gradual Release (Illustrative)

Weeks	Primary emphasis
1–2	Introduce and explicitly model both organizers.
3–4	Guided practice and supported oral retells.
5–6	Increase independent organization and oral retelling.
7–8	Reduce teacher modeling and prompts.
9–10	Practice mental organization without viewing the organizer.
11–12	Emphasize independent oral retelling during instruction.

Implementation Safeguards

Use the same two templates; integrate practice into existing core lessons; include an oral retell opportunity each session; record text type, minutes, and deviations. The comparison classroom continues typical instruction. Do not introduce the organizer or coaching prompts during formal assessments.

Weekly Implementation Fidelity Log

Teacher: _____ Week #: _____ Dates: _____

Target: approximately three embedded core-reading sessions per week. Record what actually occurred, including missed sessions.

Session / Date	Text type/Selection	Organizer used	Oral retell?	Minutes
1 / _____	_____	_____	Yes / No	_____
2 / _____	_____	_____	Yes / No	_____
3 / _____	_____	_____	Yes / No	_____

Instructional Fidelity Check

☐ Identified important information (modeling or reinforcement)

☐ Students organized information using the planned strategy

☐ Students had an oral retell opportunity

☐ Support level matched the planned gradual-release phase

☐ Any modifications or missed instruction were documented

Weekly Summary

Narrative sessions: _____ Informational sessions: _____ Sessions delivered: _____ / 3

Level of support used: ☐ Teacher model ☐ Guided ☐ Independent with organizer ☐ Without organizer

Interruptions, deviations, student response, or follow-up needed:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Reminder: This log is for instructional implementation, not student-level assessment scores.

Story Retell Map

Name: _____ Story: _____

Use a few words or short phrases. Think about what is important to tell someone who has not read the story.

Who? Characters	**Where?** Setting
Beginning What happened first?	
Middle What happened next?	
End What happened at the end?	

Practice: Tell the story aloud in your own words, using the important information in order.

Informational Retell Map

Name: _____ Text: _____

Use a few words or short phrases. Choose details that help explain the main idea.

Main Idea What is the text mostly about?
Key Detail 1 What important information supports the main idea?
Key Detail 2 What important information supports the main idea?
Key Detail 3 What important information supports the main idea?

Practice: Explain the main idea and the key details aloud so someone else can understand the text.