

Book reviews

BETTER LEARNING THROUGH STRUCTURED TEACHING: A FRAMEWORK FOR THE GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY (3RD ED.)

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2021).

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In contemporary classrooms, the implementation of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework (GRRIF) is characterised by the consistent use of terms such as “I do”, “We do”, “You do together”, and “You do alone” (Fisher & Frey, 2021, p. 4). In their 2021 updated edition of *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching (BLTST)*, Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey bring forth a thorough explanation of how GRRIF is enacted. This book addresses the challenges teachers face in delivering the subject content to socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse classrooms particularly emphasising the importance of effectively differentiating instructions for students with varying abilities to ensure successful learning outcomes. Fisher and Frey contend that structured teaching plays a vital role in achieving this objective.

Book overview

The authors, both professors of educational leadership at San Diego State University and teacher leaders at Health Sciences High and Middle College, ground their conceptual framework in extensive intellectual and empirical expertise. Divided into six chapters, the book comprehensively covers all four phases of the GRRIF and offers resources for effective implementation, including exemplars and lesson plans. Chapter 1 delves into the authors’ philosophical stance on teaching as both an art and a science, accentuating the critical role of instructional frameworks in the science of teaching and using examples from classrooms which clearly muster both art and science. The subsequent four chapters provide detailed explanations of each phase of the

GRRIF: Focused Instruction, Guided Instruction, Collaborative Learning, and Independent Learning. The book concludes with a chapter addressing the challenges educators face when implementing GRRIF in their classrooms and what leadership expects for successful execution. Finally, the authors stress the importance of self-reflection by providing guiding questions for educators using the GRRIF.

Their first edition of *BLTST* was published in 2008, followed by the second edition in 2014. In this newest third edition (2021), the authors have updated the chapters to reflect modern developments of pedagogical practices. The chapter on focused instruction, has been revised to emphasise methods beyond teacher modelling to engage students and foster cognitive apprenticeship experiences. Guided instruction is highlighted as essential with added focus on scaffolding techniques in Chapter 3. The revised collaborative learning chapter places more prominence on student collaboration, drawing insights from professional learning groups to inform the concept of student learning communities. Chapter 5 prioritises the role of practice in independent learning, stressing its importance in solidifying learning. Throughout all the chapters, adaptation of distance and blended learning experiences are evident due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. The most prominent modification visible in the chapters detailing the four phases of GRRIF, is the approach to assessment, with an emphasis on real-time data collection and analysis to inform instructional decisions.

Why BLTST is important for EAL/D educators?

This book offers a comfortable rather than an arduous read and delivers a crucial framework for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) educators to be highly equipped with strategies to support Second Language (L2) learners in acquiring Standard Australian English (SAE). As clearly outlined in *BLTST*, the GRRIF, draws from Piaget's (1952) theory of cognitive development, Vygotsky's (1962) Zones of Proximal Development, and Wood and colleagues' scaffolded instructions (1976) which are essential for successful pedagogical practice in EAL/D education. In *BTLST*, Fisher and Frey demonstrate substantially how, SAE proficiency encompassing speaking, listening, reading, viewing, and writing skills (ACARA, 2022), can be efficiently achieved through the enactment of the four phases of the GRRIF.

Another key strength of the book lies in its incorporation of diverse array of examples drawn from contemporary classrooms, vividly illustrating the application of each phase of the GRRIF. Throughout the book, authors corroborate vibrant examples of the integration of learning concepts with real-life applications, facilitating differentiation of content, process, and product - all invaluable to EAL/D learners in developing proficiency. EAL/D educators can readily relate these examples to the unique lifestyles and cultural background of L2 learners, as depicted in the book, underscoring the importance of understanding students and their contexts in fostering content knowledge. This book can also be used as a resource for a broad audience, particularly in EAL/D contexts, and it clarifies how the GRRIF can be seamlessly integrated with various other teaching frameworks and strategies, making it a versatile tool applicable across different educational settings.

As an immigrant with an EAL/D background myself, I am deeply convinced that the adaptation of Fisher and Frey's GRRIF in modern classrooms facilitates differentiation. This empowers EAL/D students to acquire L2 proficiency and succeed in accessing and interacting with mainstream curriculum in SAE. Therefore, this book stands as an invaluable resource for EAL/D educators seeking to deliver content in a manner that resonates with their diverse learners.

In conclusion, it is evident that this latest edition of *BLTST* by Fisher and Frey emphasises the significant impact of teaching on students' lives and underscores the critical role of intentional decision-making in shaping learning experiences. As such, this book serves as an indispensable guide for implementing the GRRIF effectively in classrooms across various contexts, thereby fostering learning opportunities for every student, every day.

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