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Comprehension Instruction

Teaching Kids to Internalize and Meaningfully Use Comprehension Strategies to Improve Text Comprehension

Friday, January 22, 2010
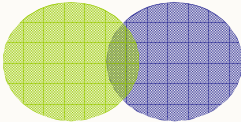**Oregon Reading First Brown Bag Session**

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The Marriage

Art
How we teach

Science
What we teach

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Increasing Achievement

1. Change the content

2. Change the instruction

3. Change the relationship between the students and the content and the instruction

Richard Elmore

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The Context

Classroom Management System

Instructional Pacing and Engagement Structures

The Content

Preparation and Planning

The Lesson and Outcomes

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Comprehension

Comprehension instruction involves a complex and long term commitment to teach students the necessary strategies and provide them with sufficient practice to use the strategies easily and the habits to use them frequently.

Pressley and Block, 2002

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Comprehension Strategies

…are conscious plans that readers apply and adapt to make sense of text and get the most out of what they read.

- Monitoring Comprehension
- Connecting to World Knowledge
- Predicting
- Recognizing Text Structure
- Asking Questions
- Answering Questions
- Constructing Mental Images
- Summarizing

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The Explicit Lesson Format

Who?	What?
I do it	**Teach/Direct Explanation**
	Model
We do it	**Guided Practice**
	Explicit Feedback
	Independent Practice
You do it	**Application**

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Many Current Materials

- Background knowledge is not adequately built
- Excessive time devoted to acquiring formal comprehension skills
- Overemphasis on memorizing the exact definition of many strategies
- Limited opportunity to readily apply reading strategies in depth
- Themes around which programs are built can be contrived and do little to build necessary knowledge
- Tier I and tier III words receive focused instruction and little focus is placed on Tier II words, which have large impact on comprehension

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During Comprehension Instruction, It Is Common To See…

The Teacher:
- Lots of "teacher talk"
- Students watching teacher practice the skill
- Calling on one student at a time to answer questions
- Simple, "right there" questions or prompts
- Waiting until the end of the instruction to ask questions
- Explaining the strategy and moving into application

The Student:
- Responding in single word utterances
- Memorizing strategies
- Forgetting to apply strategies across curriculum
- Watching the teacher as s/he discusses the strategy

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The Most Dangerous Question In Education

"Who can tell me…?"

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> *High levels of active engagement during lessons are associated with higher levels of achievement and student motivation.*
>
> Ryan and Deci, 2000

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What Does Active Engagement Look Like?

1. Verbal Response

2. Physical Response

3. Written Response

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Preparation versus Planning

Planning is figuring out **WHAT** you're teaching

Preparation is figuring out what it will **LOOK LIKE** when you teach it.

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Step 1: Direct Definition

Notes:

Pronounce strategy clearly and have students repeat

Teach the definition, purpose and use of the strategy

Sample Script:

Today we are going to learn a new strategy called predict or prediction. When you predict you take what you already know about a selection and put that together and make your best guess on what will happen next. Then you read ahead to see if your prediction is correct. Good readers predict often during a selection to keep themselves focused on the important parts of the story.

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Step 2: Model

Notes:

Demonstrate the strategy with the text, using a Think Aloud

Clarify that you are thinking aloud. Use a transition to explain that you are leaving the text to provide a Think Aloud

Refrain from asking students questions about strategy use during the Think Aloud

Provide additional models as needed during reading of a passage or selection

Sample Script:

I am going to model for you what it looks like when good readers predict. While I model, I'd like you to watch for how I connect what I think will happen to what I already know. I'll step into my modeling spot to model, while you watch, and then I'll step back and we'll reflect on what you saw. Here we go!

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Teacher Modeling: During the Model

Once you have explained what you will model and how you will model, your actual model could sound something like this:

Hmmm…I know that good readers stop and predict what they think might happen next in order to stay focused on what they're reading, so I better stop here. So far I know that Goldilocks has gone into the Bears' house while they were away and she's tried their porridge and also their chairs. I see that she's heading into their bedrooms. Based upon what I know, I predict that she will go into their closet and try on their pajamas and one set will be too big, one too small and one just right! I better keep reading to see if my prediction is correct. I think I'm right!

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Teacher Modeling: Following the Model

Once you have explained modeled what good readers do you will step back into your regular teaching area and your conversation might sound like this:

So you saw me model what good readers do when they predict. What did you notice that I did first when I modeling prediction? (Think to yourself and share with your partner – call on several students to share what they saw) What did you notice that I did next? (Think to yourself and share with your partner – call on several students to share what they saw) So how can you see yourself using prediction when you're reading on your own? (Think to yourself and whip around the room to gauge their understanding)

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Step 3: Guided Practice

Notes:

Work to define how and when to use the strategy

Use the strategy name while guiding students

Prompt students to use multiple strategies when appropriate

Provide opportunities for active participation

Remember to prompt students to use strategies every time they read

Sample Script:

Now it's our turn to use our strategy, prediction, together. We are going to read ahead in our selection together and I will stop us after a couple of pages to have us predict. I will watch and listen as you predict so that I know that you're solid on the skill. If we're having trouble, I will model it again for you.

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Provide Sentence Frames Using Academic Language

- Turn to your partner and tell them "The most exciting part of the story so far is…and I predict that the character will…"
- When you jot down your three points comparing and contrasting the two selections we've read, be sure to use the terms "similar", "different", "likely" and "unlikely"
- Great response Taylor, but this time repeat what you said and incorporate the vocabulary from our story "insistent" and "careless"
- When you share with your group, be sure to begin your sentences with the words, "I am most thrilled with the decision because…" and give three reasons supporting why you are thrilled

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Refine and Expand

Refine the grammar.
  Them dogs be big.   Those dogs are big.

Expand the meaning.
  Those big dogs are called Great Danes.

Teachers should habitually employ both in adult/student interactions.

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Step 4: Feedback

Notes:

Provide immediate feedback regarding correct and incorrect usage of strategy

Step in a model where you see students struggle

Sample Script:

If guided practice is going well, compliment students on their work and ask them how using the strategy helps them understand the text better.

If students are struggling to apply the strategy, you should stop the entire class, explain that you're noticing that this is a difficult strategy and that you'd like to model for them how a good reader would handle the strategy at this point.

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Step 5: Application

Notes:

Remind students to use the strategy while they continue to read texts across the curriculum

Sample Script:

Boys and girls, this seems like a great opportunity for us to use one of our strategies that we learned recently and apply it to our science text! I would like you to use your XYZ strategy to better understand and comprehend this text. I'll listen in as your science partner and you use our strategy.

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