Building *High Literacy* Skills for Comprehending Expository Text

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Text Comprehension

Comprehension is the reason for reading.

If readers can read the words, but do not understand what they are reading, then they are not really reading!
High Literacy Skills

Goals of instruction:

- Teach all students to think, read & write
- To apply the meaning gained from text responsibly
- Teach students procedures that permit them greater success with less effort

High Literacy Skills

Range of strategies

Select *most effective strategy* for

- Student’s particular learning needs and abilities
- Demands of specific text

NOT ALL STRATEGIES CAN BE USED EFFECTIVELY BY ALL STUDENTS

High Literacy Skills

Effectively taught strategy instruction

- Student-sensitive
- Motivates students to
  - Experiment with strategies
  - Construct own personalized versions of efficient information processing

High Literacy Skills

Reflective decision-making about
- whether
- how
to use known cognitive strategies when reading challenging text

Use the most strategic intervention possible to address the specific demands of a particular learning task

Workplaces in 21st Century

Require well developed literacy skills

- Critical reading and thinking
- Problem-solving
- Communication

Workplaces in 21st Century

- Identify problems
- Ask appropriate questions
- Locate resources and information
- Formulate and test solutions to problems
- Communicate effectively what they find

For **STUDENTS** to achieve **HIGH LITERACY SKILLS**

**TEACHERS**

- Must be chief learners in the classrooms
- Spend significant amount of time **MODELING** their own learning, and
- **SHOWING** students **HOW TO USE STRATEGIES TO COMPREHEND**
For **STUDENTS** to achieve **HIGH LITERACY SKILLS**

**PRINCIPALS**
- Need to be the chief learners in **schools**

**SUPERINTENDENTS**
- Need to be the chief learners in the **districts**
People without information cannot act responsibly.

People with information are compelled to act responsibly.

...from Ken Blanchard
REAL Reading

- Less than 25% of reading by adults and students is done in narrative texts
  
  Snowball, 1995

- NAEP (and other large scale assessments) require students to read and respond to narratives … poetry … informational texts, and functional text (reading to perform a task)

Comprehension of Expository Text

- Often determines whether students will be successful throughout their schooling
- Does not develop automatically
- Deserves *intentional* instructional focus

Expository Text

- Informational books
- Content-area textbooks
- Biographies and/or autobiographies
- Newspapers and/or periodicals
- Internet sources
- Brochures and/or manuals
- Functional (directions)
Annotated Bibliography

Expository text provides information

- Catalogued by Library of Congress as Juvenile Literature

- "Soft-expository text" provides information embedded in
  - Fiction
  - Historical fiction
  - Poetry
  - Phrase noted by Ann Fiala
Descriptives, using categories of information without specific ordering
Comparison/contrast
Sequence of events
Problem and solution
Process description
Cause and effect
### INTERNAL Text Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive</strong></td>
<td>Describes a place, thing, topic, or idea <em>telling how it is</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sequential</strong></td>
<td>Events, facts, concepts in order <em>first, second, third, then, next, last, before, after, finally</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compare/Contrast</strong></td>
<td>Identification of similarities/differences <em>same as, alike, similar to, resembles, compared to, different from, unlike, but, yet</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### INTERNAL Text Pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause/Effect</th>
<th>Description of causes and resulting effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>if, so, so that, because of, as a result of, since, in order to, cause, effect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem / Solution</th>
<th>Shows development of problem/solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>because, problem, solution, cause, since, as a result, so that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: Argüelles, María Elena. Components of Effective Reading Instruction for English Language Learners. Presentation
EXTERNAL Text Structure

- Appearance
  - Organization of print
    - Subheadings
    - Margins/Sidebars
  - Font
    - Style
    - Size
“Extras”

- Captions
- Diagrams
- Author’s Notes
- Glossary
Comprehension Strategy INSTRUCTION

Is EFFECTIVE when…

- it is explicit
- teachers tell readers why and when to use strategies
- which strategies to use, and
- how to apply those strategies

READING EXPOSITORY TEXT

Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read. (2001). National Institute for Family Literacy
Interwoven Components of Beginning Reading Instruction

Phonemic Awareness

Phonics

Fluency

Vocabulary

Text Comprehension

Identify words accurately and fluently

Construct meaning
Explicit instruction includes

- Direct explanation
- Modeling
- Guided Practice
- Application
Step by Step

I do. You watch.

- Modeling, explaining why, how, when

I do. You help.

- Guiding practice in small groups/pairs;
  providing specific feedback as needed

You do. I watch.

- Practicing independently

You do. I help.

- Scaffolding
“It’s called ‘reading’. It’s how people install new software into their brains.”
Seven Strategies

- Activating
- Inferring
- Questioning
- Monitoring-Clarifying
- Searching-Selecting
- Visualizing-Organizing
- Summarizing

Goal of comprehension

Constructing MEANING

Literal understanding isn’t enough. The reader must interact with the text.

Isabel Beck defines understanding as **being able to explain information, connect it to previous knowledge, and use information**.

Harvey, Stephanie and Goudvis, Anne. (2000). Strategies That work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding. Portland, ME: St h P bli h
Goal of comprehension

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Making Connections

- Text-to-self
- Text-to-text
- Text-to-world
Activating KNOWLEDGE
Inferring
Activating Knowledge

*Before reading*, preview the text with students and *activate* prior experiences to construct meaning from text

- What they *already know* about
  - Topic, content or time period
  - Author and/or illustrator
  - Text structure

*Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read.* (2001). National Institute for Family Literacy
Making Inferences

- Inferring ....reading between the lines
- Inferential thinking occurs when text clues merge with the reader’s prior knowledge and questions to points the reader towards a conclusion

*Inferring allows readers to make their own discoveries without the direct comment of the author.*

Susan Hall, 1990
**Take 2…Take 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vigorously</th>
<th>obnoxious</th>
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<tr>
<td>mortified</td>
<td>electrodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domestic</td>
<td>cranial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destinies</td>
<td>consternation</td>
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<tr>
<td>novel</td>
<td>dilapidated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virtually</td>
<td>geological</td>
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<tr>
<td>obsidian</td>
<td>coalesce</td>
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Curiosity Spawns Questions

- Key to understanding
- Clarify confusion
- Stimulate research efforts
- Propel us forward and increase our comprehension

Questioning

- Use continuum of questioning to generate interaction with text
  - Requires students to integrate information and *think* as they read

- Students generating questions for others
  - Requires students to know the answers

Questioning the Author

Thinking more about who has written the text and the message or meaning of the content of the text

- What was the author trying to say?
- What could the author have said instead?
- What was the intent of the author?
- What is the point of view?
- How could it be stated more clearly?

Questions About the Text

- What or who the subject is
- What the action is
- Why something happened
- Where something is or happened
- When something happened
- How something looks or is done

Monitor Own Comprehension

- How to be aware of his/her understanding *while* reading
- How to use appropriate procedures when they have problems with comprehension

*National Reading Panel, 2000*
Encourage students to mark and code text with thoughts and questions, “to leave tracks” so they can be reminded later what they were thinking as they read that text.

Harvey, Stephanie and Goudvis, Anne. (2000). Strategies That work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding. Portland, ME: St h pl i h
Searching for Information

- Using a variety of sources within the text to select appropriate information
- Refining clarity of understanding and clarifying misunderstandings
- Solving problems stated in text

Connections & Relationships

Use visual aids based on text structures

- Think Sheets
- Story Maps
- Graphic Organizers
- Concept Maps
- Word Banks

Gersten & Baker, 2000
Strategic Tools

Semantic Feature Analysis

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Size:

- immense
- tiny
- ordinary

- bicycle: tiny (X)
- insect: ordinary (X)
- mountain: immense (X)

Venn Diagram
Synthesizing

- Puts together separate parts to make a new whole
- Allows readers
  - to make sense of important info, increasing comprehension
  - to change their thinking
Summarizing

- Restating the author’s meaning accurately in student’s own words
- Creating a product that reflects comprehension
Comprehension Strategies

- Are not ends in themselves
- Are means of helping students understand what they are reading
- Are used in context, especially with content area reading

www.nifl.gov
The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.

Mark Twain
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