

# Comprehension Strategy Instruction: An Essential Element of Every Child's Learning Experience

## The What and Why of Comprehension Strategy Instruction

- We have 35 years of research that shows that children who receive strategy instruction are far more successful at both fluency and comprehension than non-strategy peers
- Comprehension strategy research focused on what proficient readers do well, rather than studying what can go wrong for readers.
- Strategies help students become more active and reflective about their reading.
- Strategies become a common language teachers and children use to discuss books and learning.
- Strategy instruction helps us teach comprehension explicitly—making meaning is taught not caught!
- Strategies helps us raise expectations for all children.
- Strategies help students to read with depth and focus.
- Strategies help us focus our instruction on the reader, not just the text.
- Strategies help children build a vast bank of content area knowledge.

## What are the comprehension strategies?

### Monitoring for Meaning

- Knowing when, as a reader, you fully understand
- Knowing when, as a reader, you don't understand
- Knowing what you need to understand
- Knowing a wide range of fix-up strategies to repair comprehension

### Use Schema

- Relate the new to the known - activate prior knowledge to help understand new information
- Make connections between texts, portions of the same text, the text and broader knowledge and the text and the reader
- Create schema using in a variety of ways if, as a reader, you realize that you lack necessary schema to understand a text or concept

### Infer

#### Predict

- Make independent decisions about inexplicit meanings
- Create meaning to fill in gaps in the text
- Form opinions and defend them
- Draw conclusions and defend them

### Ask Questions

- Generate questions before, during and after reading
- Use questions to focus on one aspect of the text, delve more deeply into its meaning and extrapolate to insights within and beyond the text
- Create Images
- Use images that emanate from all five senses to understand more vividly, more deeply
- Use images that emanate from the emotions to understand more vividly, more deeply

### Determine Importance

- Make decisions about which ideas and/or concepts are most important in a text
- Articulate why those ideas are most important and what influenced you, as a reader, to focus on them
- Identify key themes and series of events in text
- Extrapolate to less explicit meaning or larger ideas within and beyond the text

### Synthesize

- Be aware of the evolution of thought during reading - how your thinking changes as you read
- Create a cogent expression of key points after reading - this expression may contain information from a variety of sources outside the current text

# What does Instruction Look Like?

Teachers model and think aloud to show:

- How proficient readers use one or more strategies while reading text, particularly challenging text;
- How proficient readers use comprehension strategies as thinking strategies across the curriculum;
- How readers interact, using the strategy language, with others and/or use writing to better understand the ideas in a given text;
- How readers and writers set and/or use a particular purpose for reading and writing;
- How readers enhance comprehension because of and in conjunction with the interpretations of others;
- readers assume a stance or bias with respect to the author, the text, other readers;
- readers create models (oral, written, artistic and dramatic) to show thinking about text.

## The Nitty Gritty

- Select a strategy
- Study the key points related to the comprehension strategy -what will you teach during the strategy study?
- Read adult text; scrutinize your own use of the strategy
- Consult the gradual release of responsibility continuum for early phase preparation
- Select texts from which to think aloud - become very familiar with the text
- Begin thinking aloud, gradually inviting the children to participate through turn and talk and trio share
- Encourage the children to immediately apply the strategy in independent reading
- Confer to assess progress in using the strategy and to set new goals - use the book the child is reading or the book used in the think aloud
- Continue thinking aloud; use more difficult texts and new genres
- Plan on 4 - 6 weeks per strategy study
- Use an integrated and a focused approach to strategy instruction (integrated use of the strategies when introducing them at the beginning of the year and after several or all have been taught at the end of the year; one of the time and building cumulatively between).

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