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How to Use This Notebook

If you are struggling with showing your students how to master these reading strategies, we invite you to explore this instructional model that shows that it takes "more than mentioning" to achieve real results. Each chapter begins with a personal story from one of us that clearly connects to the reading strategy highlighted in that chapter. We then explain the importance of each strategy along with a brief, research-based explanation of how good readers use the strategy to help them understand what they are reading. Each element of the Comprehension Strategy Instruction Plan is presented as a framework of how to implement the strategy in your classroom. In addition, booklists offer lots of quality literature choices in both fiction and nonfiction that will be especially relevant for that particular strategy. A step-by-step checklist will help you plan your instruction, and an explicit model shows you how the lesson might look in your classroom. Because fiction and nonfiction often require different thought processes, we show specific models for each.

Lots of real student conversations show you some of the teacher-student interactions that are likely to occur while you are teaching your students *how* to comprehend. Then, we ask you to reflect on what you have learned as a way to make learning meaningful to you. You will then be better able to apply your new knowledge to your current teaching practices. The Four Squares of Reflection ask you to define the strategy you just learned, create a graphic that helps you explain it, generate questions that linger for you, and apply what you have learned to real-life situations. We adapted this exercise from the work of Marzano (2004) and Marzano and Pickering (2005), who use this process for teaching new content vocabulary to students. This reflection exercise asks you to think in linguistic as well as nonlinguistic terms, because when you can define a concept in words and create a graphic representation, such as a sketch, your learning will be deepened.

Next, we provide suggestions for how to scaffold these strategies for struggling readers and English language learners so you can provide meaningful learning opportunities for all your students.

Finally, we provide a number of useful Teacher and Student Resources, including posters, bookmarks, checklists, templates to make your own explicit models, and assessment tools, so you are ready right away to begin putting these ideas into practice. A Teacher Resource CD contains all these Appendix items in a reproducible format, as well as additional booklists and bibliographies.

Planning Instruction

The first step is to use the four instructional principles as a framework for creating your effective reading comprehension program.

Because the Comprehension Strategy Instructional Plan is fundamental to powerful reading instruction, we show you explicitly how each element is addressed for each comprehension strategy. These four elements are as follows:

1. Embed comprehension instruction in realistic reading settings.

Strategy instruction makes most sense when it occurs in settings that students encounter in their everyday lives. Rather than relying on contrived text or workbook exercises, we recommend that you use high-quality, compelling children's literature. The annotated

list of books included for each strategy has been used by practicing teachers and includes fiction and nonfiction, picture books, and chapter books. All of these books are appropriate for use with grades prekindergarten through eight. While it is common to use picture books in the early-childhood grade levels, we know many middle school teachers who also use picture books for modeling appropriate strategy use. We highly recommend this practice because it removes the demand for decoding, allowing students to concentrate on using the strategy. Some picture books are more sophisticated than others; we suggest that you browse through our lists, or see a complete compilation of all the titles in the Bibliography of Children's Literature, pages 285–290, as well as a bibliography organized by strategy use on the Teacher Resource CD.

2. Explain and model the process in a shared reading activity.

After working with hundreds of teachers and teacher candidates, we have come to realize that mental modeling is a difficult teaching skill to master. We have found ways to make it easier, showing you an explicit model lesson delivered verbatim, then using unique templates that allow you to create and rehearse your own script. Choose the book you will use for your lesson, then complete the template for an explicit model found in the Appendices or on the Teacher Resource CD. Through a shared reading lesson, you can show your students what the strategy is and how to use it.

3. Support students as they try the strategy.

Posters, bookmarks, and graphic organizers are included for each strategy to be used as scaffolds for students as they attempt to apply the strategies on their own. You will also find templates for charts, checklists, and assessments at the end of each section. Of course, the most important component in any lesson is the interaction between the teacher and the student. We provide real-life scenarios from classrooms, showing you how it looks when students begin to use these strategies.

4. Release instructional support.

It is difficult to let your students work independently as they try something new. We explain how to gradually release responsibility so students can become independent problem solvers as they read. The close of each section explains how you will know when your students have successfully learned the strategy, along with some self-evaluative checklists.

Summary of Each Section

Devoting a section to each of the six strategies provides a detailed description of how to implement an effective overall approach to comprehension instruction. Each section include lists of recommended literature that is appropriate for the particular strategy, detailed mental models that show how to present each strategy in a way that makes your thinking visible for students, and checklists that remind you of all the steps in the process. Templates for these models, as well as resources such as posters, bookmarks, assessment checklists, and student activities are included at the end of each section and are also available on the Teacher Resource CD.

Introduction

This section offers an overview of the research that has informed this book, as well as a discussion of the best practices to use in the classroom. A presentation of the framework for effective comprehension instruction details how to apply each strategy, including tips for planning, organizing, and implementing instruction. Templates will help you as you embark on this process on your own. This section ends with a reflection exercise to help you as you begin to make your own instructional plan.

Strategy One: Predicting

This strategy is offered first because it seems to be easiest for most novice teachers to grasp. Predicting at the text level and at the word level is explained. We show you how to teach it by asking students to look for clues from the pictures, the author's words, and their personal experiences.

Strategy Two: Making Connections

When students think about how the text reminds them of things they have already encountered in their own lives or in other texts, they are activating *schema*. Schema theory says that readers' background knowledge is crucial to understanding print. We show you how to make this clear to students.

Strategy Three: Visualizing

Creating "mind movies" based on the author's explicit and implicit meanings helps readers make the text personal as well as clear. This chapter shows you how to use picture books as well as chapter books to encourage visualizing.

Strategy Four: Questioning

Questioning is something that good readers do as they read. Asking questions allows the reader to stay engaged with the text because he or she is actively looking for answers within the print. Sometimes questions allow the reader to self-monitor and to ask, "Does this make sense?" Both types of questioning are explicitly modeled.

Strategy Five: Inferring

Sometimes called "reading between the lines," inferring is one of the hardest strategies for young readers to master. Much of their ability to infer depends on their prior knowledge, as well as their ability to glean information from typographical signals, punctuation, and other visual features of the text. This chapter shows you how to model making inferences by drawing on clues from the text as well as personal experience to determine the author's deeper meaning.

Strategy Six: Summarizing

Possibly the most difficult of all the comprehension strategies, summarizing requires the reader to synthesize lots of information. We show students how to sort out what is important from the myriad of details and information included in a book. Explicit models make this difficult strategy more personal and attainable.

Additional Resources

Finally, since many teachers are using basal reading programs, we include information on ways to successfully combine the six comprehension strategies and a scripted curriculum to supplement and enhance this type of instruction. Explicit models demonstrate how to integrate specific strategy instruction into a curriculum, and the Comprehension Strategy Instruction Plan is revisited to show how explicit mental modeling can complement a prescribed instructional plan. Helpful templates are provided in the Appendix and on the Teacher Resource CD, allowing you to customize your own mental models.

An Explicit Model of Making Predictions with Fiction: *Hey, Al* (Yorinks 1986)

Step 1: Remind students that good readers make predictions about what is going to happen while they are reading.

I say: Students, when good readers read, they make predictions. They try to figure out what is going to happen next. And they do this the whole time they are reading! Let's take a look at our strategy poster.

Use fiction Making Predictions Strategy poster (Appendix 1.1, page 62).

Step 2: Give students the definition of *predicting* in "kid-friendly" language.

I say: A prediction is a guess that is based on what you already know and what you see on the page in a book. But you have to have good reasons for your guess. When you make predictions about stories, you think about what will happen next in the story. Let me show you how I make predictions and then check them as I read.

Step 3: Read a portion of the book aloud. Stop at a good point to make a prediction.

Stop at: Bottom of second page of print in *Hey, Al.*

Step 4: Tell students your prediction.

I say: I think Eddie is going to keep complaining, and it will get on Al's nerves. They will have a big fight.

Step 5: Model for students how you use the pictures on the page to help you make your prediction.

I say: Here is one clue that helps me with this prediction—the picture on this page! The picture shows me that even though they are friends, they both look angry. So, I know that if I'm reading a picture book, I can look at the pictures to get some help for making a prediction.

Point to the word *Pictures* on the strategy poster.

An Explicit Model of Making Predictions with Fiction: *Hey, Al* (Yorinks 1986) *(cont.)*

Step 6: Model for students how you use words on the page to help you make your prediction.

I say: And, here's another clue that I get from the page—the author's words. Al said, "Today, it's a house you want. Tomorrow, who knows? Maybe the moon!" These words tell me that Eddie seems like he is never happy. Al seems sick of his complaining. That tells me that Al is frustrated with Eddie. Eddie must complain a lot. The author's words help me make my prediction, too.

Point to *Author's Words* on the strategy poster.

Step 7: Model for students how your experiences help you make your prediction.

I say: And finally, I get clues from my own experiences. My experiences tell me that when friends have a disagreement, sometimes it blows up into a great big fight. I know this because on one really hot day, I went to an amusement park with a friend. She kept complaining about how hot it was. It seemed like she was whining. It eventually got on my nerves, so we got into a big fight. This makes me think that Al and Eddie will have a big fight. The things that happen to me often happen in stories, too. My experiences help me make predictions.

Point to *My Own Experiences* on the strategy poster.

Step 8: Remind students that as you read, you will stop to check your predictions and make new predictions.

I say: Now I'm going to keep on reading. Then I will stop to see if this prediction was accurate or if I need to change it. As I read, I'm going to keep making new predictions and checking them, too. Watch how I do this while we read.

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Template for an Explicit Model of Making Predictions with Fiction

Step 1: Remind students that good readers make predictions about what is going to happen while they are reading.

I say: _____

_____

Step 2: Give students the definition of *predicting* in "kid-friendly" language.

I say: _____

_____

Step 3: Read a portion of the book aloud. Stop at a good point to make a prediction.

Stop at: _____

_____

Step 4: Tell students your prediction.

I say: _____

_____

Step 5: Model for students how you use pictures on the page to help you make your prediction.

I say: _____

_____

Step 6: Model for students how you use words on the page to help you make your prediction.

I say: _____

_____

Step 7: Model for students how you use experiences to help you make your prediction.

I say: _____

_____

Step 8: Remind students that as you read, you will stop to check your predictions and make new predictions.

I say: _____

_____