

## FOR-PD's Reading Strategy of the Month



(Developed by Glass, C. & Zygouris-Coe, V., 2005)

### Rationale:

"Reading comprehension has been defined as a process of constructing meaning from written texts, based on a complex coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson as cited in Mastropieri, Margo, & Scruggs, 1997)." The most important goal of reading education is to develop readers who can derive meaning from texts. There is considerable evidence that good readers are strategic readers. Strategic readers have a repertoire of strategies that they can pull from as they read. Strategic readers are highly metacognitive, which refers to the reader's awareness of his or her own reading and thinking and the ability of the reader to apply self-correction measures in an effort to understand the text.

Why do strategies work? Strategies are effective because they encourage development of text representations that may not develop in the absence of instruction (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997). Students must receive explicit instruction in when to use the strategy, why to use the strategy, and how to use the strategy. In the 1970's and 80's researchers identified strategies that increased student understanding of text and the most effective ways to teach those strategies. In 2001, the National Reading Panel identified multiple strategy instruction as an effective means of improving text comprehension.

Reciprocal teaching is a scaffolded discussion technique that is built on four strategies that good readers use to comprehend text: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Reciprocal teaching is a research-proven technique for teaching multiple comprehension strategies (Oczuks, 2003). The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) has advocated the use of cooperative and collaborative learning with multiple reading and learning strategies and highly recommends reciprocal teaching as an effective teaching practice that improves students' reading comprehension.

Reciprocal Teaching focuses on helping students acquire comprehension strategies. Teaching students the four strategies empowers students with tools that excellent readers use to meet their goals in reading a text. Poor readers become active and strategic much like "excellent readers." By using Reciprocal Teaching, teachers instruct students by using four basic strategies instead of reading skills. Teaching students multiple strategies encourages them to read as good readers read by providing them a bank of strategies they can draw upon. Students practice the strategies while reading actual text. Students are able to generalize the strategies into other content areas because they have been provided with meaningful and authentic purposes for use of the strategies. The teacher provides the scaffolding and support as students develop the strategies. Scaffolding provides support to help learners bridge the gap between what they know and can do and what they need to accomplish in order to succeed in a learning task. Students provide support to each other and develop a sense of community.

The goals of reciprocal teaching include (Oczuks, 2003):

- Using four strategies to improve comprehension
- Teacher scaffolds instruction of the strategy by modeling, guiding, and applying the strategies.
- Guide students to become metacognitive and reflective in their strategy use
- Help students monitor their reading comprehension
- Use the social nature of learning to improve and scaffold reading comprehension
- Instruction is provided through a variety of classroom settings – whole-group, guided reading groups, and literature circles.

Brown and Palinscar (1984) provided the initial research on this teaching technique. They found that students who were taught these strategies and who were involved in the Reciprocal Teaching routine, made significant gains in comprehension in a relatively short time frame. Students who scored around 30 percent on a comprehension assessment scored 70 to 80 percent after just 15-20 days of instruction using reciprocal teaching (Brown and Palinscar, 1984). After one year, the students maintained the comprehension growth they had achieved (Oczuks, 2003). In her own research with reciprocal teaching, Oczuks (2003), found that student's reading levels rose one half to one full grade level in just 18-20 reciprocal teaching lessons two or three times per week. In another study, Cooper et. al. reported dramatic results in reading levels after 76 reciprocal teaching lessons (Cooper, Boschken, McWilliams & Pistochini, 2000).

## How to Use the Strategy:

As you can see, reciprocal teaching is a very powerful strategy. Because it is such an extensive strategy, FOR-PD has decided to break the strategy up over a few months. The month of May, we will focus on the two strategies of predicting and questioning. The month of June, we will focus on the two strategies of clarifying and summarizing. The month of July, we will focus on the strategy as a whole and a teaching sequence that has proven effective with reciprocal teaching.

## Predicting

**Predicting** involves previewing the text to anticipate what will happen next. The thinking processes involved in predicting assist students in making meaning (Block, Rodgers, & Johnson, 2004). In order to do this successfully, students must activate relevant background knowledge that they possess on the topic. Once students have made a prediction, they have a purpose for reading, to confirm or disprove their prediction. Furthermore, the opportunity has been created for the students to link the new knowledge with the knowledge they already possess. By making predictions, readers are using the following processes: prior knowledge, thinking on a literal and inferential level, adding to their knowledge base, linking efferent and affective thinking processes, making connections, and filling the gaps in the author's writing (Block et. al., 2004).

Readers must make logical predictions based on information from the text and their prior knowledge. Knowledge of fictional text structures such as characters, setting, problem, resolution, theme or lesson assist students in making predictions. Nonfiction reader aids such as text headings, illustrations, and features such as maps, captions, and tables also help students make logical predictions about what they think they will learn from the reading. Giving students the opportunity to preview what they will be reading by discussing text features and using graphic organizers provides students with visual clues for predicting (Oczkus, 2003).

**Before reading**, good readers make predictions about what they are going to read. Students should be encouraged to look at the front cover of trade books and picture books. Subheadings, illustrations and captions, as well as graphics and charts in informational text. Students should make logical predictions based on what they have seen. Asking students, "Based on the information you have seen, what do you think you will learn?" Ask students for their rationale. "What in the text makes you think this way?" "Did you use any other information aside from the text to formulate your prediction?" This is a skill that all students must have for the FCAT; they must be able to provide evidence from the text.

**During reading**, good readers gather evidence about their predictions; revising, abandoning, or creating new predictions based on what they are reading. Students should be asking themselves, "Does the text support this prediction?" If evidence to support their prediction is not in the text, should the prediction be revised or abandoned?

The teacher should draw the student's attention to specific contextual features for making predictions rather than simply asking them to guess what will come next. Some questions for focusing students on contextual features include:

Narrative Text:

- What do you know about this character that helps you predict what s/he will do next?
- Given the situation in the story, what will possibly happen next?
- In stories like this one, what usually happens next?

Informational Text:

- What do you know about this subject that can help you predict what will be covered next?
- Look at the sub-heading (or picture, map, graph, etc.). What does the sub-heading lead you to believe will be presented next?
- Why do you think the author wrote this? What information will be presented next?

To **assess** prediction skills, the teacher might observe the student as they are reading. When observing the students the teacher will hear the language of prediction (Mowery in Oczkus, 2003). The students might say things like:

- I think ....
- I'll bet...
- I wonder if ...
- I imagine ...
- I suppose ...
- I predict ...
- I think this text will be about...

By observing, teachers can see specific reading behaviors that students demonstrate. When observing students make

predictions from fiction, the teacher should look for the following reading behaviors:

- Does the student preview the cover of the text and make predictions based on the illustration or title?
- Does the student stop to make predictions while reading?
- When reading the text, does the students make predictions based on clues from the text or illustrations?
- Does the student use knowledge of story structure to make predictions?

When observing students make predictions from nonfiction text, the teacher should look for the following reading behaviors:

- Does the student use headings or subheadings to make predictions?
- Does the student use illustrations, charts, graphs, or maps to make predictions?
- Does the student predict what is likely to be learned based on clues from the text or illustrations?
- Does the student use prior knowledge of the topic to make predictions?

One reading strategy that we have already featured is the *prediction wheel*. The Prediction Wheel provides guided practice in making predictions, checking predictions, and revising predictions as needed.

## Questioning

Good readers ask questions throughout the reading process. When students generate questions, they first identify the kind of information that is significant enough to provide the substance for a question. They then pose this information in question form and self-test to ascertain that they can indeed answer their own questions. Question generating is a flexible strategy to the extent that students can be taught and encouraged to generate questions at many levels.

When students know prior to reading that they each need to think of a question about the text, they read with an awareness of the text's important ideas. They automatically increase their reading comprehension when they read the text, process the meaning, make inferences and connections to prior knowledge, and finally, generate a question (Lublimer in Oczuks, 2003). Students must be shown how to generate questions about a text's main idea, important details, and about textual inferences.

To **assess** the students ability to develop questions, the teacher might observe the student as they are reading. When observing the students the teacher will hear the language of questioning (Oczuks, 2003). The questions might include the following words:

- Who...
- What...
- When...
- Where...
- Why...
- How...
- What if...

By observing, teachers can see specific reading behaviors that students demonstrate. When observing students generate questions based on fiction or nonfiction text, the teacher should look for the following reading behaviors:

- Are student generated questions based on the text?
- Does the student generate questions based on the main idea of the text or story?
- Does the student generate detail-oriented questions?
- Does the student generate questions based on story structure?
- Does the student generate questions based on text structure?
- Does the student generate inferential or higher order questions?

One reading strategy that we have already featured is the *Modified QAR (Question-Answer-Relationships)*. As students become comfortable with identifying types of questions and answering them, they can begin writing examples of their own questions in lieu of responding to your questions. Student-generated questions can be exchanged with other classmates who then answer and classify the student-produced questions.

***Next month, the Reading Strategy of the Month will focus on the two remaining strategies – clarifying and summarizing. Then in July, the Reading Strategy of the Month will focus on how the four strategies interact to develop comprehension.***

## Resources:

**ReadWriteThink Lesson Plan** – This lesson plan provides an example of how to teach predicting and questioning.

**ReadWriteThink Lesson Plan** - This lesson plan uses reciprocal teaching strategies as a vehicle for revising student writing.

**English Online** - this site provides an overview of reciprocal teaching.

**Project WebSIGHT** - this site provides an overview of reciprocal teaching, lesson plans at the elementary and middle school level, and teacher resources.

**Reciprocal Teaching: Support for Struggling Older Readers** - this online article details a secondary teachers use of reciprocal teaching.

**Reciprocal Teaching Bookmarks** - you can print these out and use them with your students.

### References:

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