







Improving Comprehension

*An Interactive Session for the Pre K-3
Educator*

*National Reading First Conference
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Questions We Will Answer

-  Why do we need to improve our current comprehension practices?
-  What should the teacher be doing during powerful comprehension instruction?
-  What should the students be doing during powerful comprehension instruction?
-  What should I plan for?
-  How do I increase motivation during comprehension instruction?
-  What does it look like when we put it all together?

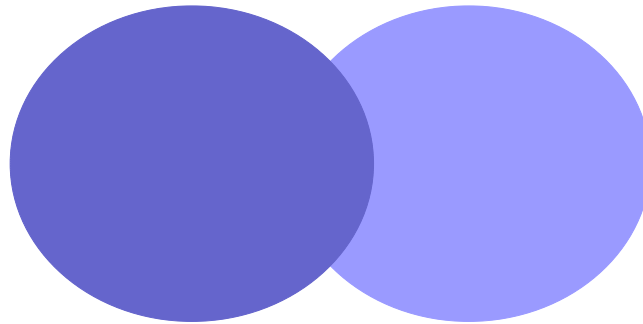
Speaking of Comprehension

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

The Marriage

Art
How we teach



Science
What we teach

The Right Combination: The 3 Ps

Program

Placement

**Instructional
Power**

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

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

The Most Dangerous Question In Education

“Who can tell me...?”

Teacher Effects

The increase in students' achievement due to using certain teaching strategies

Barak Rosenshine

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.

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!

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!

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)

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.

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.

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.

What are Positive Instructional Interactions (Pii)?

A Pii is defined as any interaction between a teacher and student in which the student learns something new or establishes a skill with greater mastery.

Dr. Joseph Torgesen

Successful teaching interactions (and interventions) always provide a significant increase in the number of Pii(s) the student experiences per school day. Instructional intensity is increased when the number of Pii(s) is increased.

What are some examples of Pii(s)?

Example I:

A teacher explains a concept clearly, at the right level, and the student is actually attending and processes the information correctly.

Example II:

A teacher corrects a student's error in a way that allowed the student to respond correctly the next time.

Example III:

A teacher models a correct response, with the students attending and learning from the model.

What It Takes...

True Active Engagement

+

Increasing Number of Pii(s)

=

**Success and Content Mastery for ALL
Students**

Putting It All Together: The Model

As you observe the instructor model, ask yourself the following:

- How is this similar to my current instruction, or what I see in the classroom?
- How is it different?
- What do I notice about what the teacher is doing and what the teacher is doing?
- What will it take for me to boost my comprehension instruction?

Where Do We Begin?

- Take a look at your current literacy materials and determine which strategies are taught
- Ask your team: Do we have standards definitions, purposes and uses for all of the strategies across the grade levels? If not, create them!
- Analyze a lesson where a strategy is taught and “run it through the process” and determine where you might need to augment the instruction to make the strategy work more powerful
- Begin by increasing academic language during every interaction – remind yourself to expect it all the time!
- Plan for and commit to using several engagement structures so that they become part of the routine of the classroom and you use them often to increase Piis
- Plan for cross curricular application

Important Instructional Reminders

- Expect students to respond in complete sentences
- Model and expect the strategy names to be used during discussion
- Use many opportunities for engagement “peppered” throughout the instruction to increase Piis
- Plan for opportunities for extending the basic response by prompting “Why?”, “Tell me more!” or “Aiden, can you extend Hannah’s response?”
- Plan ahead to use strategies during science, social studies, math and other content areas