

READING: TRANSACTIONING WITH TEXT

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Reading is one of the most uniquely human and complex of all cognitive activities (Van Den Broek & Kremer, 1999, p. 1).

The importance of reading as a key to effective functioning in society today has been emphasized by businesses, governmental agencies, educators, as well as others. The demands for high level skills have never been greater, given our technological and global society. Thus, students in schools are challenged to meet high standards in reading. At the same time, there is a tendency to ignore the fact that successful reading is complex and depends upon the integration of many different processes; that is, reading must be viewed as a complex interplay of many factors, not the simple exercise of skills (Clay, 1985). This chapter focuses on the transactional nature of reading, highlighting the dynamic, ongoing nature of reading to which readers bring prior knowledge, experience, beliefs, and attitudes (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Rosenblatt, 1985). Meanings are not simply in the text to be extracted by readers. Rather, successful encounters with text are constructive and interpretive: readers of all ages relate the new to the known, integrate and refine concepts, and make (not simply take) meaning.

This chapter also addresses instruction at several stages of literacy learning: Expanding Literacy and Enhancing Literacy. In the first sections of the chapter, the focus is on learning to read and the importance of developing print awareness and knowledge of the alphabetic principle. Attention is given to the development of sight vocabulary and fluency in these sections. The chapter also

discusses vocabulary and comprehension instruction, important at the Expanding Literacy stage and also critical as students begin to focus on reading to learn (Enhancing Literacy). There is much overlap between the two stages of Expanding and Enhancing Literacy. As young readers develop their reading abilities, they begin to use reading to learn. It is essential, therefore, that teachers at all levels attend to the dimensions of vocabulary and comprehension. It is also essential that teachers of content areas focus not only on vocabulary and comprehension, but, if necessary, assist their students in enhancing their word level skills.

CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL READERS

In this chapter, research and theory about reading instruction is used as a foundation for the ideas and strategies presented. As mentioned previously, four perspectives or lenses are provided for looking at the literacy curriculum and at student learning. Reading is a **meaning-based process**, with readers bringing what they know and believe to what is presented in the text, and through that interaction creating an understanding. That understanding is a **human** or personal “process” given the different experiences and purposes that readers bring to text. At the same time, reading is a **social** process that is enhanced when supported by talk, dialogue, and collaboration with others. As readers interact with others about what they have read, they discuss contradictions or confusions created by text and enhance their understanding of the material. Reading is also a **language-based** process in that it involves the use of language as a means of learning across all subject areas. Students need much opportunity to use language for authentic, communicative purposes. Creating environments that provide for authentic language learning means integrating the language processes with each other, especially reading and writing. These four lenses create a framework for all teachers as they help students learn to read and read to learn. Thus, this chapter has information important for teachers of reading and for content area teachers who understand how important it is to help students in their interaction with written text.

There are varying perspectives about reading instruction, especially in how to teach beginning reading. The current view calls for a “balanced” approach to initial reading instruction, one that provides systematic phonics instruction embedded

within a rich reading and writing curriculum with a focus on ongoing, effective comprehension instruction (Snow et al., 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000). Unfortunately, too often, professionals find themselves “taking a side.” Yet it seems as though a thoughtful discussion about the various aspects of this issue will reveal its complexities and enable teachers to make decisions in a more informed manner. Pearson and Raphael (1999) state: “teachers are not simply either whole language or skills teachers. At times, for some children, they look like the one; at other times, for other children, they look like the other. ...they make conscious, intentional decisions about individual students” (p. 11).

Freepon and Dahl (1998) have written a carefully constructed article presenting various conceptions of balanced instruction and present implications for classroom practice. They conclude that “there are differences by degree and in the ways that people think research into practice occurs in balanced instruction” (p. 248). They recommend that teachers read the research and mediate it with contextual factors such as needs of students and their own learning. In other words, all teachers, in planning and implementing reading instruction, must think about the students they teach and their unique needs and characteristics. They must also be knowledgeable about the content and processes of reading instruction. And finally, they must think about their own beliefs and values and at the same time be open to new ideas and practices as they formulate goals and activities for students.

THE SUCCESSFUL READER

Successful readers are active and motivated; they engage in reading for a variety of authentic purposes, both in and out of school. Likewise, they bring to the text their prior experience, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. They also bring information about what is involved in the act of reading itself – how to read both easy and difficult material. (Lytle & Botel, 1988).

Successful readers not only draw on their prior knowledge or schema to organize and interpret new information, but these schema are modified or elaborated on by new information (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1980). Indeed, because each reader brings different experiences to a text, including their own unique cultural backgrounds, responses to a specific text will be diverse. Rosenblatt (1985) describes readers as transacting with a text, or assuming various stances which shape responses. Lytle & Botel (1988) indicate that readers, to be successful in reading across the curriculum, need to acquire some general approaches to reading that are useful across a variety of texts and contexts. Figure 1 describes ways that readers become engaged with text before, during and after reading (Lytle & Botel, 1988). Teachers of all subjects can think about which dimensions of this chart are most appropriate for the texts they use.

FIGURE 1. TYPES OF TRANSACTIONS WITH TEXT

TYPES	DEFINITIONS	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
Emotional, Experiential and Autobiographical	Initial response, showing involvement with the text; identifying and/or empathizing Experiencing the text by using mental/sensory imagery	What stands out for me? How do I feel about this?
Connective	Linking text with prior experiences, with attitudes and ideas and similar texts, other ideas within the text; making analogies	What does this text make me think of? Remind me of? How does this text fit with what I already know about this subject?
Descriptive and Analytic	Noticing features of the text, e.g. choice or function of particular words, syntax or length of sentences; functions of sentences or paragraphs in the text; characters and events; tone; type of discourse; style; use of metaphor or other figures of speech; author's arguments.	How does this text work? What's going on here? What does it say?
Interpretive and Elaborative	Using reasoning or problem-solving strategies to construct meaning, resolve doubts and make sense of text; hypothesizing; making predictions, asking questions; using evidence to confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis or prediction or to answer own question. Explaining, exploring, making inferences, questioning and defining intentions, problems, themes, symbols. Creating, revising and adding to text. Implications of ideas, including argument incongruities, discrepancies, ambiguities, omissions.	What does this text mean? What might be added here? omitted? changed? Where can I apply these ideas? How valid/reliable is this?
Evaluative	Evaluating the text according to criteria related to appropriateness, effectiveness, difficulty, relevance, importance of content or form.	Does this make sense? How [good] is this? What do I agree/disagree with?
Self-Reflective	Noticing one's own processes of reading; monitoring or keeping track of current understandings of words, sentences, or discourse level meanings; noticing conflicts between text and own knowledge and beliefs.	What am I doing as I read? What questions do I have? What do I understand? not understand?

Successful readers also read constructively, that is, they pose questions, and find and solve problems (Freire, 1978; Shor, 1987). They also monitor their own understanding as they read, using a variety of strategies. They integrate information from their own experiences and from other texts they have read (Fairclough, 1992; Hartman, 1995). In fact, Hartman (1995) suggests that “a reader’s understanding transcends his or her comprehension of any single passage” (p. 520) because good readers always link what they are reading to what they have read before.

Successful readers also have an understanding or knowledge of their own reading processes and strategies, what is currently referred to as “metacognition” (Brown, 1978). They have an understanding of the nature of reading —the purposes and goals, factors that influence it, and the use of strategies. They also have control of their actions while reading, that is, they monitor their own learning.

Importance of Time for Reading

When students have opportunities to read, they have opportunities to “orchestrate the skills and strategies that are important for proficient reading. In addition, such reading results in the acquisition of new knowledge, which fuels the comprehension process. There is a reciprocal relationship between prior knowledge and comprehension – the more one knows, the more one comprehends; the more one comprehends, the more one learns new knowledge “ (Fielding & Pearson, 1994, p. 5).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1999), fourth grade students who reported that their teachers gave them time to read books of their own choosing on a daily basis had a higher average score than their peers who reported being given time to do so less often.

By making free or voluntary reading a regular part of the school day, teachers

demonstrate their understanding of its importance to students. They also permit students to practice what they are learning with a variety of materials and little pressure. Such a commitment requires a well stocked classroom library and a plan that promotes reading on a daily basis. Approaches such as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), Drop Everything and Read Time (DEAR Time), or promoting school read-a-thons can be very motivational and encourage students to become avid readers.

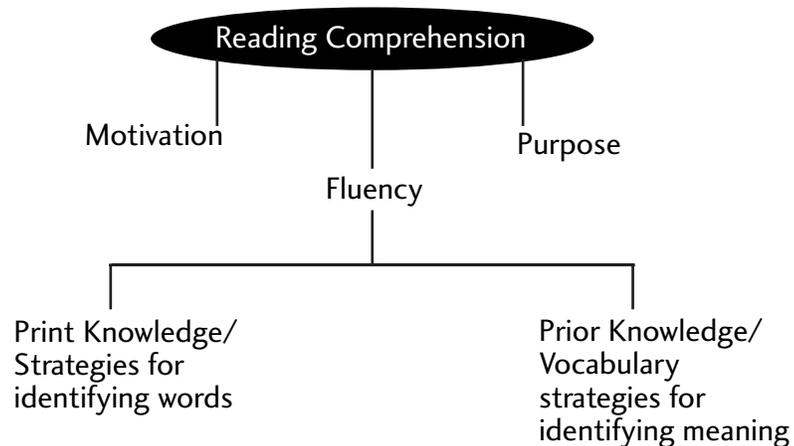
ASPECTS OF READING

To nurture the development of successful readers, teachers at all grade levels and subject areas need to have an understanding of the various aspects that can be influenced by instruction. Needless to say, the emphasis will be different depending upon grade level, subject, and the needs and interests of individual students. According to the Report of the National Reading Council (Snow, et al., 1998), initial reading instruction requires a focus on using reading to obtain meaning from print; the sublexical structure of spoken words; the nature of the orthographic system; the specifics of frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships; frequent opportunities to read; and opportunities to write. Adequate progress in learning to read beyond the initial level depends on having established a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically; sufficient practice to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts; and control over procedures for monitoring comprehension and repairing misunderstandings (p. 314).

The graphic in Figure 2 illustrates various factors influencing reading comprehension of any text. Readers’ specific purposes for reading certainly influence comprehension as does

one's motivation to read something (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Comprehension is also influenced by the readers' ability to read accurately and efficiently, (i.e., fluently). Readers who not only have decoding skills, but can use them "automatically" and without effort can put much more effort into comprehending (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). Readers must also have the print knowledge that enables them to identify words and strategies to use when they come to an unfamiliar word. Finally, the prior knowledge of the reader's familiarity with the vocabulary of a specific topic and the use of meaning-making strategies influence reading comprehension. If one or more of these factors is lacking, reading comprehension will suffer.

FIGURE 2. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO READING COMPREHENSION



The ultimate goal of reading instruction is comprehension. Thus, regardless of the focus of teaching (e.g., print knowledge, vocabulary, etc.), this goal should be uppermost in the thinking of teachers. In this chapter, the discussion begins with print knowledge, recognizing, however, that many other prerequisite skills and abilities influence reading performance. Many of these (e.g., language development, concepts about print) are addressed in the chapter on Early Literacy. Comprehension is addressed focusing first on the importance of vocabulary meaning as a means of enhancing comprehension. Next, the comprehension process is discussed describing those factors that affect comprehension. Each of the parts in this chapter includes two sections: ❶ a discussion of the theory and research related to a specific aspect, and ❷ description of ideas for instructional practices. Broad instructional guidelines and some examples of effective strategies are included.

SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF READING: WORD RECOGNITION

Print Knowledge Strategies for Identifying Words

Young children need many experiences with literacy and language. Prior to formal schooling, they should have had many opportunities to develop concepts about print, to be exposed to literature, to develop their phonemic awareness abilities, and to become aware of the connection between phonemes and spellings. Initial instruction should build on those experiences, and continue to provide explicit instruction and practice with sound structures that build phonemic awareness, familiarity with spelling-sound correspondence and common spelling and their use in identifying printed words. Students also need experiences with identifying various words at sight and reading text fluently.

Phonemic Awareness

Research results indicate that phonemic awareness as well as letter knowledge are two school-entry predictors of how well students will learn to read during the first few years (Snow, et. al., 1998; Blachman, 2000). Moreover, “phonemic awareness training is more effective than alternate forms of training or no training in helping children acquire phonemic awareness and in facilitating transfer of phonemic awareness skills to reading and spelling” (National Reading Panel, pp.2-19). A more indepth discussion of phonemic awareness can be found in the chapter, *Early Literacy*.

Phonics

The role of phonics in beginning reading instruction has been the center of much controversy and debate. This debate has caused much confusion among teachers and

administrators as well as parents. According to Ehri (1991), skilled readers are adept at sounding out words and recognizing common letter sequences. The assumption is that if children can recognize words, then they will be able to understand them. Research conducted with young and sometimes struggling readers, has indeed, supported this assumption (Lovett, Ransby, Harwick, Johns, & Donaldson 1989; Vellutino, et. al., 1996).

Evidence from research speaks to the need for an early code emphasis (Foorman, 1998; Snow, et al, 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000); however, such an approach must be embedded within a rich reading and writing curriculum and balanced with ongoing, effective comprehension instruction (Anderson, et. al., 1985; Adams, 1990; Snow, et. al., 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000). As stated in the National Reading Panel Report (2000, p.11), “...systematic phonics instruction is only one component—albeit a necessary component—of a total reading program”. In other words, phonics instruction is essential—but not sufficient!

The research calls for a systematic approach to phonics rather than one that is presented incidentally, meaning that a sequential set of phonics elements is identified and taught. Such programs have produced significant benefits for students in kindergarten through sixth grade and for struggling readers.

The National Reading Panel Report (2000) issues several cautions about phonics instruction: ❶ Phonics instruction is a means to an end and thus students must have opportunities to apply what they are learning in daily reading and writing activities. ❷ There is a need for flexibility given the individual differences of students.

There is not clear cut evidence about the benefit of one code-emphasis approach over

another (Pearson, 1999; National Reading Panel, 2000). What appears to be critical is that students are given experiences that help them use the alphabetic principle as one of the primary means for identifying words.

In summary, the notion of balanced instruction is an important one; it requires teachers to make decisions in an informed manner, using the results of research and at the same time, mediating those results with what they know about the needs of the students they teach. In other words, teachers need to attend to the teaching of phonics, and at the same time, provide many experiences that demand reading and listening to, thinking and writing about quality textual material (both literature and informational).

Instructional Practices for Phonics Instruction

Key guidelines important for teachers to consider are described below.

- ▶ **Students need to be helped to understand that there are several cues to identifying words. According to Clay, (1993), readers use four types of cues or information: meaning (does it make sense?); visual cues (Does that look right?); letters/sounds (What can you hear? What would you expect to see?); and structure, grammar (Can we say it that way?) (p. 42). In the early grades, teachers need to encourage students to use what they are learning about the alphabetic principle to identify unknown words, using other cues as supporting or verification strategies. Research results indicate that effective readers use decoding strategies while struggling readers tend to rely more on context or meaning cues (Juel, 1988; Snow, et al., 1998). Posting a chart or list of strategies in the classroom to be used by readers when they come to an unknown word can be extremely helpful.**
- ▶ **Students need many experiences with writing (See Writing Chapter) as a means of developing their print awareness ability. According to Snow, et al., (1998), “Beginning writing with invented spelling can be helpful for developing understanding of the identity and segmentation of speech sounds and sound-spelling relationships” (p. 7,8).**
- ▶ **The focus of phonics instruction is NOT that children are able to state rules; rather the purpose is to help students understand that there are systematic relationships between letters and sounds. Thus, children need many experiences manipulating letters and sounds,**

with strategies such as *Making Words*, (Cunningham & Hall, 1994), *Building Words*, (Beck & Hamilton, 1996) or *Word Analogies* (Gaskins, Gaskins, & Gaskins, 1992). In the reference section of this chapter, we provide a list of resources that provide excellent ideas for developing such lessons.

- ▶ Not only do children need experiences with understanding the relationship between letters and sounds, but they must have opportunities to blend these sounds together (Anderson, et al, 1985; National Reading Panel, 2000). Activities using sound or Elkonian boxes give students opportunities to blend sounds/letters, forming words.
- ▶ Phonics instruction should be followed by experiences that require students to practice what they have learned. In other words, students should be provided with material that contains elements that they have been taught since such decodable text enables students to apply what they have learned (Hiebert, 1999; Snow, et. al., 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000).

SIGHT WORDS

The recognition of a core group of words at initial levels will enable students to give more attention to comprehension. Effective sight word recognition requires that students be instructed in learning these words. According to Fry, Fountoukidis, & Polk (1985) it is estimated that approximately 50% of all the words we read and write are accounted for by 100 highly frequent words. Recognition of these high frequency words during the primary grades provides a basis for fluent reading (Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson & Paris, 1998). Often, high frequency words are those with irregular letter-sound patterns (e.g., come, their and there, was, only) or they are abstract words that can't be learned easily (e.g., the, or, which, how). Thus, students need many and varied

exposures through writing and reading so that they can gain the “automaticity” needed to become fluent readers.

Instructional Practices for Sight Word Development

- ▶ Effective sight word development requires that children have many opportunities to learn those words through varied writing and reading activities (Hiebert, et. al., 1998). They can learn to identify these words through various games. Words can be posted throughout the classroom (e.g., Word Walls) or students can have their own personal word banks (Hiebert, et. al., 1998). These activities provide a means for students to refer to words for independent spelling or writing. At the same time, providing students with many opportunities for oral reading will give them the necessary practice with these words in context. Partner reading, independent reading and reading at home are important activities for promoting knowledge of sight words. Children should have much practice with books that they can read easily (books at their independent reading levels). These activities provide for practice with words but do not expose students to the negative aspects of round robin reading.
- ▶ Students will benefit if teachers provide a multi-sensory approach to recognizing sight words. Teachers can have students say, read, write, and trace such words. Teachers can also use songs effectively as a means of reviewing sight words.

FLUENCY

Being able to pronounce words is not enough; students must be able to pronounce words accurately, automatically, and with proper expression. LaBerge & Samuels (1974) found that the automatic recognition of words was essential for comprehension. Later research has supported the validity of this

assumption (Tan & Nicholson, 1997; Breznita, 1997). In the early stages of learning to read, children need to practice reading in books with which they are highly successful as a means of developing fluency. Such texts should be at the students' independent reading level (See insert for one definition of various reading levels). Hiebert, et. al., (1998) suggests that students should be able to decode about 95% of the words accurately in a text for such practice. Books that are decodable (i.e., that contain words with systematic spelling patterns, or emphasize particular consonant or vowel sounds/letters that have been taught) can help students develop fluency because students can successfully read them on their own (Hiebert, 1999).

Instructional Practices for Developing Fluency

- ▶ Provide experience with many different kinds of texts. Texts in classrooms include many different structures: predictive books that contain a repetitive pattern, poems with rhyme, simple books with strong picture support, or short, decodable books which focus on a particular vowel sound, several phonograms, or a particular consonant sound. Activities such as choral reading, partner reading, repeated readings, and echo reading are a few examples of helpful activities. Readers Theatre, reading of song lyrics, and poetry are also excellent strategies.
- ▶ Identify appropriate reading materials for student reading. This is an example of a leveling frame.

Criteria for Three Reading Levels

Level	Word Recognition (%)		Comprehension (%)
Independent Reading Level	98-100	&	90-100
Instructional	95-98	&	78-89
Frustration	Less than 95	or	Less than 78

*From Richek, Caldwell, Jennings, and Lerner, 1996

- ▶ Teach children a strategy for identifying a book that is “just right” for them (Are there five words on this page that I don’t know?). Books can also be organized and identified in the classroom so that children have some knowledge of how to select. They can be organized by genre, by topic, or by general readability.

- At all levels, provide students with experience in both narrative and expository text and with all types of genre.

Expanding of Print Knowledge (Language Structure Knowledge) at Higher Grade Levels

Students will benefit from attention to word analysis skills beyond primary grades especially if there is a focus on how those skills relate to meaning. Instruction about morphology (units of meaning), including prefixes, suffixes, and root words helps students decode words, and in addition, helps them to learn the meaning of a word, and to better comprehend the passage in which the word occurs. Experiences with these skills occur, not only in reading class, but in content areas where there is often the need to focus on technical words essential for understanding the passage. For example, working with the morpheme, graph (to write), can help students learn the meanings of monograph, paragraph (English), topography, polygraph (social studies) or graphite (science).

It is important to consider the ideas and suggestions in Chapter 5: Investigating Language for understanding print conventions as you consider this aspect of reading. Good readers use their knowledge of print conventions throughout their reading lives to aid in decoding print information.

SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF READING: COMPREHENSION

Comprehension is a complex process involving knowledge, experience, and thinking. It depends not only on knowledge of individual and groups of words, but knowledge about text structure, and about the world at large. It is more than a set of discrete skills. It involves inferential and evaluative thinking, not just

literal reproduction of the author's words. There is also an affective aspect to comprehension with students relating to text on a personal or emotional level. Comprehension is essential not only to success in reading, but in all academic learning and to lifelong learning. Finally and most important, comprehension can and must be taught! (Just because students can read the words does not mean that they can comprehend the passage!)

All teachers, across the curriculum, are concerned with helping students comprehend what they read. Science teachers want students to be able to remember the details that will enable them to conduct and analyze an experiment. The social studies teacher's goal is that students not only remember important facts about an historical event, but that they make the inferences that enable them to understand why that event occurred. Each teacher, regardless of subject matter, has a responsibility to help students use the tools of learning appropriately, and when those tools involve reading, the subject matter teacher must know how to facilitate students' understanding of text.

VOCABULARY

Not only do proficient readers have extensive vocabularies, but having a more extensive vocabulary promotes comprehension (Beck & McKeown, 1990; Graves, 2000; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000). Research suggests that vocabulary instruction can lead to gains in comprehension if the instructional approaches are appropriate to the age and ability of the reader (National Reading Panel, 2000). Vocabulary can be learned incidentally by wide reading, through direct instruction, and also by employing various strategies for learning vocabulary (e.g., use of word parts, context, origin of words, and use of the dictionary). Teachers can improve vocabulary

and comprehension by preteaching various words that are important to the meaning of a text and by reinforcing the meanings after the text has been read. When vocabulary is taught through direct instruction, there is a need for much repetition, multiple exposures, and active learning by the student. Efforts must be made to help students make personal connections with words (Graves, 2000; Gipe, 1998). Teaching students strategies for learning vocabulary is also critical; these approaches are especially important in the content areas where words have specific technical meanings.

Instructional Practices for Teaching Vocabulary

► Deciding which words to teach to students is an important decision for both the reading teacher and the content teacher. Graves suggests that teachers ask the following questions :

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- ❶ Is understanding this specific word important to the understanding of the selection?
 - ❷ Are students able to use context or structural analysis skills to discover the word's meaning?
 - ❸ Can working with this word be useful in helping students develop their context, structural analysis, or dictionary skills?
 - ❹ How useful is the word outside of the reading selection?
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(Graves, 2000, p. 121)

If teachers believe that students should use their own skills independently to discover the meaning of a word, then they should not preteach that specific word. On the other hand, there are words that the teacher will want to emphasize and preteach. In general, it is more productive to focus on fewer words and teach them in more depth than to attempt to “cover” too many words.

- The strategies one selects for teaching words depends upon the nature of the word. Words that are “new” labels for concepts students know require less time-consuming teaching procedures. On the other hand, words that represent new and challenging concepts require robust procedures. These words often occur in content area subjects where students are dealing with new concepts (e.g., democracy in social studies, photosynthesis in science) (Graves, 2000).
- Teaching strategies for learning words is a more efficient way to help students learn than trying to teach specific words! These strategies include: using context, using word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and roots), and using the

dictionary to learn or verify word meanings. Students should also have experiences with the thesaurus as a means of extending their vocabularies.

- ▶ Wide reading is an important means for increasing and enhancing vocabulary. Thus, teachers should provide opportunities for activities such as sustained silent reading during the school day and encourage independent reading at home.
- ▶ Because vocabulary is important, not only as an aid to comprehension, but in and of itself, opportunities for students to enjoy working with words and to develop word consciousness should be encouraged. Students who have a sense of word consciousness are fascinated by words and also enjoy learning and using them (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1987; Watts & Graves, 1996).
- ▶ When teachers read to students they can select challenging books that students may not be able to read for themselves. Students are introduced to many new words and concepts through this approach. Teachers at all levels—and across all subjects—should read aloud to students as a means of developing enthusiasm for reading or a particular subject and for increasing knowledge about that topic. There are many resources that provide ideas for teachers about which books to select, *Read Aloud Handbook* by J. Trelease (1985); *For Reading Aloud* by Kimmel & Segel (1988).
- ▶ Parents should also be encouraged to read to their children on a regular basis, thus providing a model of effective oral reading, and in addition, demonstrating the parents' value for reading. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (1999), there was a consistent relationship between the amount of reading done for school and homework and students' reading scores. Students

who read more pages each day demonstrated higher reading performance (p. 88). Parents should, therefore, encourage reading as a free time activity and take their children to the library.

Instructional Practices for Teaching Comprehension Strategies

Comprehension is enhanced when readers engage in intentional, problem solving thinking processes and when they relate the ideas represented in print to their own knowledge and experiences. The Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening require students to demonstrate the ability to respond to reading in such ways. Moreover, the rubric for assessing response to reading encourages varying stances and perceptions. Although some readers may acquire strategies for comprehending informally, research indicates that explicit or formal instruction in the application of comprehension strategies can be highly effective in enhancing understanding. Research suggests that teaching comprehension in various subjects, (e.g., social studies), can be effective (National Reading Panel, 2000). A useful model for comprehension instruction is to make use of meaning making strategies before, during, and after reading of a selection (see figure 3). All teachers, at all levels, can make use of these strategies whenever they use written text. Although some activities are more appropriate to literary and others to informational text, all encourage readers to become actively and meaningfully engaged with the text. Lytle and Botel (1988) explain the importance of before, during and after reading activities.

Before Reading: These activities are designed to link students' experiences to the text, access relevant prior knowledge, become acquainted with the scope and organization of the text before reading it.

During Reading: These activities are designed to help students read constructively, to use a range of "types of transactions" appropriate to the task, and to capture initial personal responses. The importance of working with the text by interacting with students at appropriate spots is critical in helping students to think about what the "author is trying to say" and to clarify confusing or unclear segments (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997).

After Reading: These activities are designed to further develop initial responses, to gather data about responses from students, to connect with other texts, to consolidate facts and ideas, and to deepen and extend students' responses.

FIGURE 3. READING STRATEGIES FOR MEANING-MAKING SURROUNDING READING WITH TALKING, LISTENING, AND WRITING

BEFORE READING

Questioning (teacher and/or students) and Discussing prior knowledge, textual clues (title, headings, summary, etc.) predictions/confirmation

Brainstorming
 using textual clues
 using topic article
 using key words or concepts
 using an analogy or problem
 word map

Extended Brainstorming + Categorizing + Mapping
 using material from text, topic, key words, etc.
 bulletin board

Connecting to
 Own experiences
 Other texts and authors
 Previewing the text
 examining clues to overall structure/
 elements of story

setting purposes and general questions
 anticipation guide
 selecting appropriate reading strategies

Writing
 non-stop; focused or generalized
 jotting or note-making questions
 pretest or questionnaire

Enacting
 role-play, improvisation
 dramatization, debate, etc.

Constructing
 graphic organizers
 sketching, drawing, building
 semantic maps

Viewing
 film, video, on topic
 of reading (while writing)

DURING READING

Teacher-Directed
 questioning/predicting
 role-taking
 playing doubting/believing
 reading aloud

Students Independently
 mark or gloss text
 take notes
 write questions
 partner read
 keep reading journal
 predict
 read to prove predictions
 re-read
 alter reading rate
 make associations
 compare and contrast
 restate information
 monitor comprehension
 ask questions; use fix -
 up strategies
 hypothesize
 ignore small problems and move
 on
 seek expert source for
 clarification
 reciprocal questioning

AFTER READING

Discussions
 retellings (from different
 points of view)
 respond to any before or
 during reading activities
 reflect

Enactments
 debate, panel discussion,
 dramatization, simulation
 role-play etc.

Oral Presentations
 demonstrations; talks

Writing
 nonstop: focused or
 generalized
 note-making
 writing or answering questions
 mapping or revising
 map previously made
 literary or informational text
 making up test
 story mapping

reciprocal teaching

request procedure

Reading
 related material
 rereading text from different
 perspectives
 constructing
 sketching
 drawing

Questioning
 self-questioning
 generating questions from
 text

Viewing
 slides, filmstrip, video
 film, etc., related to text

Summarizing

Evaluating what was read

EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT INSTRUCTION OF READING COMPREHENSION

Dole (2000) discusses in depth two instructional formats—explicit and implicit—that can be used by teachers for promoting comprehension. Her model is used as a basis for discussing comprehension instruction.

Explicit Instruction Although explicit instruction means that teachers will focus on direct teaching of strategies, there are many differences between current concepts of direct teaching of comprehension and what was taught in classrooms of the past. Past efforts focused on teaching of comprehension skills with the assumption that comprehension skills could be mastered. However, the cognitive revolution of the 70's and research at that time led educators to rethink the way in which comprehension is taught. Pearson and Dole (1987) discussed several differences between the new explicit instruction and the old discrete skill teaching model. First, in the new model, comprehension is not broken down into a set of subskills, each practiced one by one (locating details, finding the main ideas); instead, instruction is practiced with the whole text. Second, in explicit instruction, there is no assumption that comprehension is ever mastered. And third, there may be more than one right answer!

Results of experimental studies in which groups receiving strategic teaching are compared with control groups have generally favored the students instructed in using strategies (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter & Schuder, 1996; Collins, 1991; Anderson, 1992). These studies have been conducted with students of various ages and varying abilities.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION OF READING MATERIAL

- ▶ The National Reading Panel identified seven strategies that are helpful in improving comprehension and indicated that many of these strategies are even more effective when used as part of a multiple-strategy method.
- ❶ Comprehension monitoring, where readers learn how to be aware of their understanding of the material
- ❷ Cooperative learning, where students learn reading strategies together
- ❸ Use of graphic and semantic organizers, such as story maps, where readers make graphic representations of the material to assist comprehension
- ❹ Question answering, where readers answer questions posed by the teacher and receive immediate feedback
- ❺ Question generation, where readers ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story or text
- ❻ Story structure, where students are taught to use the structure of the story as a means of helping them recall story content in order to answer questions about what they have read
- ❼ Summarization, where readers are taught to integrate ideas and generalize from the text information

The Pennsylvania Reading Instructional Handbook (1998) provides many different ideas for developing lessons for building comprehension with both narrative and informational texts.

- ▶ Strategies can and should be taught as students interact with a complete piece of text. At the same time, teachers may focus in a specific lesson on only one strategy, describing it, modeling, guiding students to the use of it, and then

releasing responsibility so that students have opportunities to practice it.

- ▶ The Readers Workshop format, which can be used at all levels (K-12) provides excellent opportunities for working with students in becoming better comprehenders. Teachers interested in this procedure would enjoy the book, *Mosaic of Thought* written by Keene and Zimmerman (1997) which provides practical ideas for teachers of all grades.

Implicit Instruction The impetus for this approach is generally based upon a philosophical rather than a psychological approach and stresses the importance of instruction occurring in rich contexts. Students must have a purpose for and value communicating with others. Instruction values and promotes the social, personal, cultural, and idiosyncratic response to text. With implicit instruction, the teacher is a guide or facilitator. One might also consider this type of instruction to be “on-line” instruction in which teachers and students work together to reason out the meaning of the text. When students participate in discussions of text, they tend to engage in more dialogue about that text and the quality of their discourse is more complete (Almasi, 1995; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Leal, 1992).

There are many possible outcomes associated with using guided small group discussion at all levels, secondary (Alvermann, 1986; Alvermann, O’Brien, & Dillon, 1990) as well as elementary (Gall, 1987; Gall & Gall, 1990, Almasi, 1995). These include deeper understanding of text; an increase in higher level thinking and problem-solving ability; improvement of communication skills; and “social connectedness” (Slavin, 1977). In other words, such small group discussion can have positive effects on class relationships, friendships, and attitudes toward others.

One example of an implicit approach to

teaching comprehension is **literacy response** or reader response (Beach, 1993) or **literature circles** (Vogt, 1996). These approaches focus on stances that readers take and how these stances affect responses (Langer, 1992).

According to Langer (1992), readers who engage in a response-based approach to literature are able to negotiate their own meanings and come to deeper interpretations about what they read. Such an approach bases responses on readers' own personal and cultural experiences as well as on the text. Literature used in such an approach should be of high quality, across a variety of genre and many different cultures and times. Folktales, drama, biography, realistic fiction, essay, speeches, and novels would all be appropriate. Students can also be introduced to quality multicultural literature with positive portrayals of characters to help all children develop multiple perspectives and to get a better sense of their own culture, as well as others.

Literature circles or study groups (Eeds and Wells, 1989; Peterson and Eeds, 1990) are excellent examples of implicit instruction. Students and teachers read the same material and then talk about it, focusing on students' personal and social reactions to the literature.

Sandora, Beck, and McKeown (1999) compared two approaches to response based discussion: **Questioning the Author and Great Books**. Although both methods provide students with opportunities to engage with text and construct meaning, and share ideas, there is one basic difference. The discussion in Questioning the Author takes place during the reading when ideas are initially encountered and collaborative construction of meaning takes place throughout the entire reading. In the Great Books approach the focus is on developing interpretations of meaning and discussion only after the entire story has been read. The findings of the study, conducted with sixth and seventh grade students, indicated that students' comprehension and interpretation of texts were significantly better with the Questioning the Author approach than the Great Books technique. In other words, discussion during reading allowed students to become more active in reflection and meaning making.

Instruction using an implicit approach to comprehension involves students in activities that demonstrate the four lenses of reading, (e.g., reading is meaning based, reading is a language process, reading is a social process, and reading is a personal/human process). It also promotes engagement with

text and enjoyment of reading. Such an approach can be used with both narrative and informational text and by teachers at various levels and of different subjects.

Instructional Practices for Teaching Implicit Comprehension

- ▶ Providing a context that promotes student discussion and risk-taking is essential. In discussions, students serve many roles often reserved for the teacher. They inquire, facilitate, respond, and evaluate. The teacher serves more as a facilitator, scaffolding student interaction and interpretation, if needed.
- ▶ Discussion is influenced by many factors which need to be taken into consideration by teachers if they are to be successful. Gambrell (1996) identifies them:

-
- Type of Text
 - Group Size
The quality of discussion is enhanced when group size is small; further children get to speak more often and in more depth.
 - Leadership
Although children profit from experiencing leadership in a group discussion, there is a need for teacher guidance. Thus teachers play a significant role in the discussion.
 - Cultural Background
Students may come from backgrounds in which their language and experience is different from that expected in the classroom.

(Heath, 1983; Delpit, 1990)

▶ Discussions can be used effectively with informational texts in content area classrooms. Mazzoni & Gambrell (1996) suggest several guidelines that may be helpful.

-
- Ask fewer teacher-generated questions; increase number of student generated questions.
 - Integrate and apply text to talk (use text to support ideas).
 - Pose a single higher order question, issue, or problem.
 - Increase student responsibility for comprehending text. Be sure they apply their own world knowledge to discussion.
 - Emphasize higher level reading and thinking skills.
 - Provide opportunities for each child to verbalize and share his or her point of view.
 - “Prime the pump”, provide opportunities for small group, peer-led discussions that lead to whole group discussions.
 - Maintain a role in guiding students’ thinking.

(Mazzoni and Gambrell, 1996, pp.145-146)

SUMMARY

We have learned that no single method, approach, or philosophy for teaching reading is equally effective for all children... (p. 10). The real question is which children need what, when, for how long, with what type of instruction, and in what type of setting. G. Reid Lyon (1997, p. 12). Congressional Testimony.

This statement summarizes well the complex nature of reading instruction. Although there are general trends or conclusions that can be drawn from the research that are important and useful to teachers, there must always be the recognition that each student brings to the classroom a unique set of skills, behaviors, experiences, and attitudes. Thus, teachers need to have the professional and educational expertise to be effective teachers of literacy, making adaptations and modifications as necessary for the students they teach.

There are some givens, however. We do know that reading and the other language arts need to be taught across the curriculum and at all levels, K-12. Language and literacy provide the means for communication and for thinking, regardless of subject, and thus are the responsibilities of all classroom teachers.

Research findings also indicate that schools that have effective literacy programs, especially effective elementary schools, have many characteristics in common. Some of these characteristics extend beyond the direct teaching of reading and require school personnel to think about the entire school reading program. In one set of schools, described in Taylor's (1999) work, there was much collaboration among teachers, small group instruction of students, communication with parents, opportunities for students to apply word identification skills, and many high level questions asked of students.

Such work reminds us that the instruction of students is one that requires commitment, collaboration, and communication among all involved.

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