



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies and Selecting Appropriate Text

December 2010

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension
Practice: Teach Comprehension Strategies

Highlights

- This multimedia overview highlights key components of the recommendation to teach students how to use reading comprehension strategies and to select appropriate text for teaching these strategies.
- Several research-based reading comprehension strategies are introduced as well as the idea of a “gradual release of responsibility” from teacher to student.
- Dimensions of text selection, such as genre, quality, and relevance to instruction, are also discussed.

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies and Selecting Appropriate Text.

Slide 2: Comprehension strategies

When good readers approach a text, they use a number of ways of thinking about text in order to understand what they are reading. These comprehension strategies need to be taught early on so that students can grow into effective readers.

Comprehension strategies are thinking tools, mental actions, or routines that are used before, during, or after reading a text. They involve deliberate effort on the part of the reader to better understand or remember what is being read.

Slide 3: Six strategies

Research studies have identified six strategies in the primary grades that improve readers' comprehension:

- Activating prior knowledge, relating personal experience, or predicting what will happen in a text,
- Asking questions while reading,
- Visualizing or “painting a picture in your mind” of what is being read,
- Monitoring or checking for understanding while reading,
- Drawing inferences, and
- Summarizing or retelling.

Slide 4: Teaching and practice

These strategies may be taught one at a time or in combination with one another. It may be easier to begin with single-strategy instruction because it allows the teacher and students to focus on one strategy at a time. However, as additional strategies are introduced, teachers should encourage students to use all the strategies they have learned while they read.

It is important that teachers explain how and why these strategies relate to better reading. Filling out worksheets or practicing strategies outside of the context of reading will not improve comprehension. Students should have opportunities to practice them while reading with peers, with teachers, and independently.

Slide 5: Multiple-strategy instruction

Training students to use multiple reading strategies may require additional professional development, but it can be quite effective in improving reading comprehension.

Approaches to comprehension strategy instruction include

- Reciprocal teaching, whereby students learn to lead discussions about text using four reading strategies that have been modeled by the teacher;
- Transactional strategy instruction, during which teachers model strategies using thinkalouds and help students practice the strategy; and
- Informed strategies for learning, whereby teachers display each strategy with a visual metaphor, like a stop sign symbol for “stop and say the meaning in your own words.”

Slide 6: Gradual release of responsibility

Because the use of strategies may not come naturally to young readers, they should be taught through a gradual release of responsibility. This means that the teacher initially takes on responsibility for explaining and modeling how to use the strategy. Over time, the teacher supports students as they practice in whole- and small-group settings. Ultimately, the teacher releases the responsibility for using strategies to the students, who are able to use them on their own.

Slide 7: Differentiating instruction

Adapting strategy instruction to individual student needs may be a challenge. Some strategies for differentiated instruction are

- Placing students with similar comprehension skills into small groups,
- Modeling a strategy more than once for students who are having difficulty,
- Lengthening the periods of guided practice and feedback, and
- Reading smaller sections of the text together.

Slide 8: Selecting texts

The choice of text can make or break the success of a reading lesson. Because students have such different needs, there is no such thing as “one size fits all” when selecting a text for teaching reading comprehension.

Teachers should introduce students to a variety of texts that

- Are rich in ideas and information,
- Have a level of difficulty appropriate to the students’ word-reading and comprehension skills, and
- Support the purpose of the lesson.

Many resources are available to teachers as they search for high-quality texts, such as lists of children's book award winners.

Slide 9: Text types

Teachers should use both narrative and informational texts to teach reading comprehension, since they require different reading skills for mastery. Here are some things to consider when choosing texts:

- Does the text have rich content?
- Does the text have strong organization?
- Is there variation and richness in word choice and sentence structure?

Slide 10: Supporting the lesson

Ultimately, a chosen text should support the purpose of the lesson.

When introducing students to a strategy, such as summarizing, select a text in which that strategy is easily applied. Later, as students become more skilled in a particular strategy, present them with a text that is more challenging. When doing a thinkaloud, use a text that is just above the students' reading level. When reading to students, select a text that is well above the students' reading level, but is at their listening comprehension level.

Slide 11: Conclusion

The strategies students practice and develop in their early years will become lifelong skills to draw upon whenever they encounter a challenging text. When they stop to check their understanding, highlight key phrases, or take summary notes, they are doing what good readers and learners do. And as a result they will be able to work with increasingly difficult texts and content.