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Recent research on appropriate strategies to facilitate and enhance reading comprehension instruction primary level

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Recent research on appropriate strategies to facilitate and enhance reading comprehension instruction primary level

Abstract

At a time when literacy is more important than ever, national attention has refocused on reading to insure that all children learn this critical skill. Through the years, the entire realm of reading has been considered extremely complex and even controversial. In no other area in the whole field of education is there more partisanship than in the area of the teaching of reading. Samuels and Farstrup (1992) stated that after years of having more educational research dedicated to the subject than to any other, there is still no precise answer resolving the question of how to teach a child to read.

RECENT RESEARCH ON APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES

TO FACILITATE AND ENHANCE

READING COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

PRIMARY LEVEL

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

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Linda Kennedy

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At a time when literacy is more important than ever, national attention has refocused on reading to insure that all children learn this critical skill. Through the years, the entire realm of reading has been considered extremely complex and even controversial. In no other area in the whole field of education is there more partisanship than in the area of the teaching of reading. Samuels and Farstrup (1992) stated that after years of having more educational research dedicated to the subject than to any other, there is still no precise answer resolving the question of how to teach a child to read.

In 1985, the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, released a report called Becoming a Nation of Readers. Prepared for the National Academy of Education, the widely acclaimed study was a summary of research findings from which it drew certain inferences. Among its recommendations were:

-- parents should read to their children.

-- teachers should spend more classroom time on comprehension strategies and less on skills.

-- students should do more independent reading and writing and fewer workbook assignments.

Samuels and Farstrup (1992) reported that educators have

always felt there was a need for a strong emphasis on comprehension in any reading program. In the past, instruction in the comprehension process was broken down into specific subcategories of skills. Such skills as predicting outcomes, inferring, drawing conclusions, and summarizing were taught in isolation. Teachers had students practice these skills in hopes that their native intelligence and experience would insure their ability to apply them. The belief that comprehension skills could be "caught rather than taught" was prevalent.

In recent years, current educators have something more in mind than the repeated practice of a skill (Singer & Ruddell, 1985). The term "strategies" has entered the vocabulary of comprehension instruction. Strategies are defined as conscious and flexible plans that readers apply and adapt to particular texts and tasks.

Currently, the comprehension process is viewed as a set of complex strategies involving interactions between readers and texts in various contexts and for various purposes. This vision of the comprehension process has shifted our ideas on how to teach it. Since it is no longer thought of as a series of skills added together to achieve comprehension ability, educators need to change their methods of teaching comprehension. Research implies that reading comprehension deserves a bigger role on our stage of reading instruction (Lipson & Wixson, 1986).

There has been a long tradition of teaching isolated skills in reading instruction and a long tradition of students showing comprehension as a problem area on standardized test scores. The practices of effective readers must be examined to gain knowledge on how to instruct reading (Singer & Ruddell, 1985). Studies by Smith, 1988, suggest that effective readers do such things as activate prior knowledge, arouse questions and predictions, make connections, infer, draw conclusions, summarize, synthesize and interpret new information in the act of reading. Smith defines reading as the orchestration of strategies harmoniously occurring during the act of reading to bring about comprehension.

Current practices lean toward assessing comprehension rather than teaching it. In terms of acquiring the skill, a high premium has been placed on separate objectives unrelated to any comprehensive model of reading, comprehension, or learning. Arbitrarily defined skill categories give little attention to the role of a reader's background knowledge and the importance of improving a reader's ability to learn how to learn. If a reader is expected to comprehend text, prior knowledge must be activated so connections to new information can be made. Teachers who understand the nature of reading comprehension and learning will search for those comprehension strategies that facilitate learning how to obtain the author's intended meaning in any text (Singer

& Ruddell, 1985).

Currently, educators are engaged in finding alternative ways to teach reading (Singer & Ruddell, 1985). What should a reading curriculum look like? How does one make public the private process of reading comprehension? How does a teacher get students to use their minds deliberately while reading? What are some effective strategies that will enable our students to achieve the comprehension ability?

This review of literature offers a prescription for reading instruction improvement on the primary level. It explores a variety of strategies to enhance comprehension before, during, and after reading.

Goal of Review

The goal of this review was to determine what is collectively known about effective teaching strategies which would enable primary students to increase comprehension ability. The strategies included in this literature search are intended to facilitate comprehension instruction in the areas of literature, social studies, science, and health at the primary grade level but could also have a much wider applicability. The selected strategies have a strong research and theoretical base.

Significance of Review

Because of the new definition of comprehension, educators face the challenge of finding various methods of teaching the

comprehension process at all levels. Researchers continue to gain insight into the complex processes involved in students' encounters with texts and reading tasks. New strategies have been researched and unveiled in attempt to make the private process of reading comprehension public. Therefore, this review was prepared to examine recent reading research which has been devoted to key issues and insights of teaching reading comprehension.

The teachers of New Hampton Elementary are currently engaged in transforming their reading program philosophy. They are pursing the belief that students must learn to use and apply skills at the strategic level in meaningful texts. This review will be a handbook of flexible, adaptable strategies and will serve as a resource guide for the teachers of this district.

CHAPTER II

PREREADING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Introduction

Current research on the use of prereading strategies is based on the notion that a clear, concise purpose for reading a selection determines the quality of comprehension (Wilson & Gambrell, 1988). Empirically tested studies were sought that provided knowledge and theory on this topic. Another specification was to seek studies that could be adapted to the primary level, modeled, practiced, and critiqued in different areas of the curriculum. Although comprehension was appropriately the central concern, other topics such as motivation to read, setting a purpose for reading and vocabulary development appeared as by-products of the research.

Perhaps a good starting point for a review of prereading strategies is to examine the nature of the topic. Many experts defined reading as Cambourne (1988) did. Reading is comprehension--making sense of the message of the text. Wilson and Gambrell (1988) defined reading comprehension as the process of using one's own prior experiences and text cues to infer the author's intended meaning. This definition points to the need for activating one's own prior knowledge and experiences in preparation for reading text.

Cambourne (1988) further stated that comprehension occurs when a reader has prior knowledge of the topic in order to fill in the gaps between the intended meanings and the surface features of the text. Samuels and Farstrup (1992) concurred, stating effective readers search for connections between what they know and the new information they encounter in text. Experts seemed to agree that comprehension can only occur when connections are made between a reader's prior information and new information offered in the current text prior to, during, and after reading.

Tierney, Readance, and Dishner (1990) defined readiness as the preparation for a reading activity. It involves getting students ready to process text by assisting them in relating their prior knowledge and past experiences to the topic of the text. This stage of the reading process is an activation of schema, an interest developer, and a purpose-setting occasion. Vocabulary introduction and clarification may take place at this time, also.

Clay (1991) described this introductory process as the scaffold within which students can successfully prepare to process any text. Further, Clay declares three components as essential to this process:

1. Students become "engaged" participants.

2. Children recall their prior knowledge and experience.

3. Teachers interact with students and, in a measured way, introduce new knowledge.

Clay (1991) emphasized it is not a case of telling students what to expect, but rather it is a process of drawing them into the activity before passing control to the students and pushing them gently towards an understanding.

According to Beed, Hawkins, and Roller (1991), students must be totally engaged as they must initiate the process of getting the meaning from the text. The teacher's role is to "maintain the interaction" throughout the prereading exercise with a progression of responses. What occurs is flowing conversation continually inviting the input of the students.

This adult assistance allows students to operate in the zone of proximal development. This is the space between what students can do unaided and what students can do with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). The scaffold provided by the teacher in readiness activities serves as a model for students. The students may internalize the essence of the thinking, knowledge or strategy and be able to carry through the task of reading without assistance (Beed et al., 1991).

In strategic scaffolding, Clay (1991) encourages a teacher to honor a student's prior knowledge contributions in a warm, supportive climate. Further, a teacher must systematically appraise the student's performance and base responses on that appraisal.

Sulzby (1985) noted the importance of the instructor marching

just ahead of a student's current level of functioning. As a child climbs to a new level, the teacher gradually withdraws support. Ideally, the student will be at the stage of reading the text purposefully, productively, and reflectively.

If students are not required to call upon their prior knowledge before encountering a text, they are limited to absorbing the content of one meaning source, the current text. Thus, emphasis is put on just interpreting the information rather than on integrating and learning new information. Mosenthal and Kirsch (1991) pointed out the need to call upon three meaning sources. These are prior text, prior knowledge, and the current text. If this occurs, it is more likely students will integrate linguistic information found in future texts, thus yielding to a fourth meaning source to make learning more meaningful.

Pearson (1985) suggested that teachers examine their beliefs about comprehending and composing. Teachers need to model strategies used in activating prior knowledge, allow guided practice for students, and then phase out support. Ideally, this will lead to independent practice of these strategies. Students will begin readiness activities as "second nature" to any reading activity. This will result in student ownership of the reading process.

The process of active comprehension is defined as students asking questions and answering them by successful reading of

current and future texts. A teacher must know how to initiate
question-asking, activate prior knowledge, and then to withdraw
support and allow students to take over. Supporting the reader
through interactions focused on strategies and meaning gives
readers the chance to become independent learners who can continue
to grow and learn from text (Short, 1991).

Prereading strategies that demonstrate their success are
those involving interaction between teacher and student.
Such strategies are modeled and monitored regularly by teachers.
They must be applied and discussed to see which works best with
students and with which particular content area (Vaughn, 1982).
The remainder of this chapter describes selected research
strategies which will activate prior knowledge and arouse
questions in the prereading stage of the reading process.

Semantic Webbing

A graphic organizer, such as semantic webbing, can be a
visual means of preparing students to read and comprehend new
text. Semantic webbing helps students learn new vocabulary and
concepts while relating them to words and notions they already
understand. It is a brainstorming activity involving interaction
between teacher and students (Weaver, 1988).

The theme of the text to be read is recorded on the
chalkboard. Students brainstorm words or concepts related to the
topic and they are placed categorically around the topic.

Teachers add additional vocabulary and knowledge when students are ready and where the new information will aid the understanding of the text. When mapping is completed, students generate questions which arise during their discussion of the mapping. Students are then prepared to read the text with a definite purpose in mind. After reading, additions and alterations are made to the map. New information is highlighted (Olson & Gee, 1991).

Weaver (1988) declared that active participation of students and the ensuing discussion are essential to the process. Olson & Gee (1991) noted that the discussions and questions that result from semantic mapping are the heart of the strategy.

<div align="center">K-W-L</div>

K-W-L stands for What I know, What I want to learn, and What I learned. Besides being a prereading strategy, K-W-L is a postreading strategy, suggesting that it guides the child throughout the reading process. Olson and Gee (1991) described K-W-L as an organization of thoughts on a topic recorded on the chalkboard or on paper. Routman (1991) suggested K-W-L works well with non-fiction. Students are asked to brainstorm what they already know about a topic, predict possibilities, and raise questions about what they want to find out. Ogle (1989) argued that using K-W-L allows teachers to model the procedures children should use when reading content texts. It can be used effectively in primary grades with teacher support both in small and large

group situations.

This strategy is a device to activate prior knowledge and focus the reader on the content. To begin, what students already know about a topic is recorded in the first column. Next, teacher and students point out gaps in the information and this is recorded in the second column under the heading "what we want to find out". The information in this column becomes their purpose for reading. After reading, children retell and review what new information they have learned from the text. This is recorded in the third column under the heading "what we learned and still need to learn" (Olson & Gee, 1991).

Students are responsive to this strategy and their ability to use it effectively increases with practice (Ogle, 1989). The extent to which they elicit their own background increases knowledge, as does their ability to generate questions.

Anticipation Guide

Weaver (1988) recommended the use of the Anticipation Guide to activate prior knowledge and to establish a focus for reading. Statements from the text or statements based on textual concepts are printed and shared with the students for their reactions. Before students read the text, they are asked to respond to these statements, checking the ones with which they agree.
Tierney et al. (1990) stated this activity will raise predictions and student-generated questions. Samuels and Farstrup (1992)

noted that any activity that generates student questions is useful to the reader. They further explained that the process of generating questions leads to a deeper level of text processing, thereby improving comprehension and learning.

The production of questions by students is a sophisticated learning behavior. When students are asked to react to statements and generate their own questions, they become focused readers. Furthermore, the Anticipation Guide can also be used as the basis for postreading discussion wherein students react a second time to the statements, this time dealing with the text information as well (Tierney et al., 1990).

Singer and Ruddell (1985) reported that in the introduction of this prereading strategy, students must be made aware that they are probing their stored information on which the new information will build. This is one of many cognitive activities that foster learners with greater attention and focus. Tierney et al. (1990) advised choosing appropriate statements on a higher level of generality in order for this experience to be an effective teaching and learning strategy.

Guided Writing

Writing activities can be useful when used as a prereading strategy to activate prior knowledge and to set purposes for reading. A journal focus or topic is recorded on the board from a content area to be studied. Students explore their background

knowledge on the topic, reflect on their previous learning and even predict future learning in their writing. This focused journal writing helps students focus on their own learning and serves as a basis for discussion (Pardo & Raphael, 1991).

Fulwiler (1982) stated that journal writing involves students in the topic because they have committed themselves through their own language to at least an exploration of an idea. Vacca and Vacca (1986) suggested students read to resolve conflicts arising from problem situations, from shared perspectives, and from examined values and attitudes. Writing about a topic before reading it, prepares students for the issues they will encounter in reading and sharpens the focus of a reader.

Prediction

To become an effective reader, Cambourne (1988) suggested engaging students in the prediction process. This strategy involves students in making personal statements, not random guesses about what they believe will happen in a text passage. These predictions are based on data which the reader is constantly using, the sense of story and flow of language.

Tierney et al. (1990) reported prediction stimulates comprehension. Weaver (1988) stated prediction encourages students to activate prior knowledge and to take risks. This risk taking is termed as "making a personal investment". Thus, the students become focused readers due to the feeling of ownership.

Students are asked to integrate their own prior knowledge and the information in the text in order to make viable predictions.

Wilson and Gambrell (1988) pointed to the necessity of teacher modeling to demonstrate this strategy using the think-aloud procedure. It is especially important that the teacher model the thinking process that is essential to the effective use of the prediction strategy by verbalizing the process of comparing the text information with prior knowledge in order to generate text-relevant predictions. Following the prediction, the text is read to compare the information gained from reading the passage. In teaching this strategy, teachers follow predictions with a guided discussion about the relevance of the predictions. Samuels and Farstrup (1992) suggested students cite the cues they found in the reading and prior knowledge to support their predictions.

Students will profit from teacher-guided practice in using prediction as a comprehension strategy. Applying the prediction strategy in independent reading should be the primary goal (Wilson & Gambrell, 1988). The student engaged in the prediction process is actively involved in the process of making sense of what they are reading (Weaver, 1988). Nolan (1991) suggested prediction provides a purpose for reading because readers anticipate coming events in the passage. Motivation is increased by the anticipation of discovering whether one's hypothesis will be confirmed.

Question-Asking

The question-asking strategy is important in helping students generate their own questions. This process makes them self-dependent readers and fosters setting a purpose for reading. Teachers need to develop strategies that will foster reader independence in forming questions and in making predictions about the reading. Simply stating the topic followed by, "What questions do you have on this subject?" may begin to stimulate student-generated questions. Teachers are encouraged to list these questions on the board to give them more validity. This also demonstrates to other students what kind of questioning is going on in the minds of fellow students as they prepare to do the reading (Weaver, 1988).

This process may be started with teacher-formulated questions about the reading task ahead (Weaver, 1988). Teacher-formulated questioning often brings relevant questions into the minds of children. Thus, student-generated questions are encouraged and phased-in with continued guidance from the teacher. The final step of this active comprehension occurs when the students begin formulating and searching for their own answers as they read the text. The teacher gently pushes the students to be active with the text in linking the new knowledge with their questions (Clay, 1991). The question-asking process allows modeling, guidance, and feedback by the teacher. They report that students

who generate their own questions show greater improvement in comprehension (Samuels & Farstrup, 1992).

Word Connections

Students should be taught to preview word lists independently prior to reading and to make as many word connections as possible. This process serves to activate prior knowledge and strengthen their personal framework before attempting to read and comprehend the text. The word connection procedure broadens word meaning knowledge. Students are given a word list from a basal story or a content textbook. Only those words critical to the understanding of the text are introduced prior to reading. They pick any two words from the instructional word list and tell how they are related. It is important to recognize that it is through the discussion about why or how the words are related to each other that vocabulary knowledge is enriched in the word-connection activity. This strategy could be applied prior to and after reading the text to aid in active comprehension (Blanchowicz, 1986).

CHAPTER III

DURING READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Introduction

Active comprehension and proficient reading involves not only preparation for reading, but involvement during reading and the ability to use strategies that enhance this process. As pointed out in the previous section, students must be aware of the goal of a reading assignment. Readers must also be cognizant of what is known about the topic, what needs to be known, and what strategies can be used to facilitate comprehension. Being aware of one's own reading process is called metacomprehension. To facilitate metacomprehension, teachers need to develop the processes used by self-reflective readers while engaged with text (VanderStaay, 1991).

Processing information requires prior knowledge, careful reading of the text, the goal of the reader, and a perception of the author's intentions. Comprehension during reading depends on the reader's ability to appropriately interrelate prior knowledge (schema) and the textual information. The power in any "during" reading strategy lies in its capacity to support these interactions. Schema has many uses in addition to facilitating the understanding of text. It provides a way of integrating our understanding of text with our understanding of the world (Singer

& Ruddell, 1985).

Recent research exposed strategies that support the interaction between schema and textual information during the reading process. The goal of teaching reading comprehension is to set up a framework of strategies that students are capable of using while engaged in a variety of reading situations without teacher support.

Visual Imagery

Visual imagery has been found to increase both listening and reading comprehension. It is a procedure for guiding students to generate visual images as a means of enhancing comprehension. The formed "pictures" may provide the framework for organizing and remembering information. Research shows there is considerable evidence that comprehension and memory are increased when students use visual imagery. When students expend this energy, benefits occur in both comprehension and recall (Gambrell & Bales, 1986).

The approach to teaching students to develop mental images is based upon teacher modeling followed by student practice. This progression from teacher-directed to student-directed learning is essential for achieving independence in comprehension (Gambrell & Bales, 1986). Gambrell, Kapinus, and Wilson (1987) suggested it is necessary for teachers to inform students that making pictures in your mind can help you understand a passage or a story. They asked teachers to offer demonstrations in response

to a story or passage thinking aloud as they go through the process.

Wilson and Gambrell (1988) suggested the following activities:

1. Advise students that visual imagery aids in comprehension and recall. Suggest, "Make a picture in your mind of the characters in the story." "Make a picture in your mind of the earth revolving around the sun."

2. Inform students that when something is difficult to understand, making pictures in their mind of what they are reading about helps comprehension.

3. Encourage students to make pictures in their mind of what they want to remember while they are reading. Later, during recall activities, remind students to use their images to enhance their memory.

Students have a natural ability to visualize but they must be taught to use this strategy to enhance recall and comprehension skills. Research suggests that students will employ visual imagery if taught and encouraged to do so (Wilson & Gambrell, 1988). Kletzien and Hushion (1992) stressed the increased enjoyment a reader can get from picturing what is happening in a story. All students can visualize characters and events even without detail from an author just by using their imagination. They can usually describe what they are visualizing. Wilson and

Gambrell (1988) recommended the use of this strategy with non-fiction as well as fiction.

Rereading

Dowhower (1987) examined the habits of effective readers and reported that when they do not understand something, frequently they go back and reread the passage. That second reading often causes the reader to put forth a more concentrated effort to engage in deeper processing in order to make sense out of the text being read. Many younger, less skilled readers may not be aware of the potential of this very basic comprehension strategy. Explicit instruction on when and how to use the rereading strategy can be enhanced using the think-aloud procedure. First, the teacher chooses a difficult passage, reads it, and verbalizes, "That is not clear to me. I don't think I understand what the author is saying. I can go back and reread it carefully to see if I can get the author's meaning this time." (Dowhower, 1987)

Prereading may be the most efficient strategy for repairing comprehension failure when it has occurred for one of these reasons: misreading a word, misinterpreting a phrase, or incorrect phrasing. Teachers can emphasize the usefulness of this strategy by asking students to share situations where they encountered difficulty during initial reading of the text but were able to understand more clearly after rereading the text. Students need to be aware of what caused their comprehension

failure. They also need to be aware of why the rereading strategy was ineffective (Wilson & Gambrell, 1988).

Self-Questioning

During the reading process, students can be taught to pose questions about the content of the text. Self-questions guide the reader in his quest for an understanding of the author's meaning. This seems to be closely related to the prediction process as both cause the reader to self-question. In self-questioning, the reader's questions are content-specific rather than of a general nature as in prediction (Wilson & Gambrell, 1988).

Self-questioning works best with expository texts because it is easier to ask specific questions of factual material. Teachers need to model how self-questioning works for students, using the think-aloud procedure. During the reading process, students self-question on the specific topic and then interact with the text for verification. Stopping points for verification of previous questions and formulation of additional questions are identified by the teacher during guided practice. The goal of having students use the self-questioning strategy is for them to take charge of identifying stopping points when working independently. Nolan (1991) noted that self-questioning directs the learner's attention to critical aspects of the text, thereby increasing understanding of important textual elements.

ReQuest

Tierney et al. (1990) reported on an adaptation of Manzo's ReQuest procedure. It is intended for use with groups of up to eight students. ReQuest is designed to encourage students to: (1) formulate their own questions about the material they are reading and develop questioning behavior; (2) adopt an active, inquiring attitude towards reading; (3) acquire reasonable purposes for reading; and (4) improve their independent reading comprehension skills.

Tierney et al. (1990) reported on an adaptation of the ReQuest procedure which Manzo originated in 1968. ReQuest develops the student's abilities to ask their own questions and to set their own purposes for reading. These skills facilitate the student's acquisition of an inquiring attitude and their ability to examine alternatives and to originate information. Manzo considered these elements to be essential if students are to transfer problem-solving involvement to different contexts.

To begin the ReQuest procedure, Gillet and Temple (1986) suggested the teacher and students use a questioning game as an activity. Students must have confidence in their question-asking ability in order to experience success with ReQuest. Next, they read the chosen text silently and take turns asking and answering questions about the selection. The teacher models good questioning techniques, provides positive feedback to the students

about his or her questions, and assesses whether or not the students have established reasonable purposes for independently completing the passage.

According to Gillet and Temple (1986), the teacher needs to select the appropriate level of material for making predictions. In order to develop some background for understanding the passage, the teachers must focus the student on the basic concepts involved by a brief and general discussion of the title. It may also be necessary to introduce some of the vocabulary contained in the selection. These points must be explained prior to or during the session: each question will be answered fully; "I don't know" is an unacceptable answer; unclear questions will be rephrased; uncertain answers will be justified.

When the students have read enough to make a prediction about the rest of the selection, questions are terminated. The teacher then assumes the role of agitator with questions such as "What do you think will happen? . . . "Why do you think so?" . . . "Read the line that proves it." After reasonable predictions and verifications are made, the teacher and student move to the next step, the silent reading activity. If the predictions are unreasonable, the teacher and students continue reading and exchanging questions until another opportunity to predict arises (Tierney et al., 1990).

During the silent reading activity, the teacher can either

read along or stand by to assist. Following the reading session,
readers might engage in activities that verify or apply the
information gained from the reading. A reconsideration and
discussion of student predictions could encourage the students to
consider variations of the story. Teachers are encouraged to
modify the ReQuest procedure whenever greater flexibility will
serve the purpose of bringing about reading comprehension
(Gillet & Temple, 1986).

Think-Alouds

Think-alouds are used by teachers to help readers examine and
develop reading behaviors and strategies. Davey (1983) suggested
that teachers should select passages containing points of unknown
words or difficulties. Teachers think-aloud to allow students to
become aware of the process being used to comprehend the text.
Teachers might encourage students to add their own thoughts to the
think-aloud modeling session.

Davey (1983) proposed that think-alouds be used as a means of
helping readers adopt a meaningful orientation to print, monitor
their comprehension, and apply self-correction strategies. She
contends that empirical studies suggest that teachers can help
students acquire comprehension skills through modeling by the
teacher followed by ample student practice. The modeling process
is used on the belief that if teachers describe their own thoughts
about a text, the students will realize how and when to do the

same.

Students work with partners to practice what the teacher has modeled. Each student is encouraged to take turns reading and thinking aloud with short passages. The partner listens and offers his or her thoughts (Tierney et al., 1990). After working with a partner, Davey (1983) suggested that students practice independently with the use of checklists to ensure student involvement and verify use of procedures.

Davey (1983) offered a number of examples of think-alouds teachers can model: predicting, visualizing, applying prior knowledge, using analogies, identifying problems, and using fix-up strategies. She encourages teachers to use think-alouds with all types of texts.

CHAPTER IV

POSTREADING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Introduction

Reading comprehension and the strategies used to increase it are part of the thinking process. Critical thinking is a part of comprehension and helps bring about proficient reading. Testing for recall provides minimal experience for this kind of active comprehension. Readers need to be able to discuss, argue, write about, and interact with the concepts with which they are confronted following the reading of a text. They need to be able to support their opinions from the text and from their own experience (Weaver, 1988).

Gillet and Temple (1986) noted that recent research encourages teachers to use both formal and informal data from multiple sources in checking comprehension. There seems to be a particular emphasis on teacher judgment as the key factor in assessing comprehension. Post reading strategies which will enable expert kid-watching must be employed so teachers can adequately assess comprehension.

A postreading strategy should allow readers to construct their knowledge of the material and to integrate new information in their schemas. It should provide closure to the reading activity experience. Comprehension strategies should provide

opportunities for readers to transact with the text and respond,
interpret, and evaluate their reading experiences (Gillet &
Temple, 1986).

Response Journal Writing

Response journal writing is a reading activity that focuses
on students' interests and needs and engenders personal
involvement. This postreading comprehension strategy allows
children to use their own knowledge, experiences and emotions to
construct personal meaning and develop a sense of text ownership.
It also gives them a focus while they are reading. Students who
know they are going to be asked to complete a journal response
after reading a text will be looking for a way to collaborate with
the author in order to compose meaning while they read (Wollman-
Bonilla, 1989).

Calkins (1986) encouraged teachers to write a positive
comment in response to a student's writing. Calkins stated
students who already possess a powerful urge to share their ideas
will be encouraged when teachers value their responses with a
comment. This responsive audience has been shown by research to
be a powerful tool in getting children to invest interest and
energy in their reading and responses.

Journal response writing puts students in control of their
own reading process. It encourages personal engagement in reading
and helps children refine their understanding of text. As a

postreading comprehension strategy, it is tailored to each child's interests, concerns, and needs (Wollman-Bonella, 1989).

Response journal writing is a powerful tool for assessing and developing a student's reading process. Through this strategy, a teacher can develop other reading and comprehension strategies, knowledge of literature, skill in communicating their ideas, and motivation to read (Wollman-Bonilla, 1989).

Frank Smith (1988) suggested asking students to join the "literacy club". What better invitation to join the club than corresponding with children in reading response journals.

Storytelling

The art of storytelling is currently enjoying a renaissance. It is being recognized by educators as a viable classroom technique to promote reading comprehension as well as oratory, writing, and listening comprehension. Students should be exposed to many teacher demonstrations of storytelling (Peck, 1989).

After hearing a story told, students will often ask to read the story. Thus, storytelling has become an invitation to read. As students become storytellers themselves, they will often go on a lengthy search for one that is just right to tell (Peck, 1989).

Morrow (1985) stated the teacher should search for a text with which the students can collaborate in order to develop critical judgement. Students compare and contrast literature in

this process. They judge a story on personal taste and literacy merit. They read for meaning.

The folktales which storytellers use embody the story structure that young listeners rely upon for understanding and meaning. Stories that are good telling stories offer the framework shown to be a significant factor in reading comprehension. Successful use of this story structure as a comprehension strategy involves the integration of various story components. In preparing to tell a story, students map the story's structure and make meaningful connections between the components (Morrow, 1985).

After choosing a story to tell, students should map out the story structure. In preparation for storytelling, students must explore vocalization, gestures, movement, and eye contact. A conferencing aspect may be adopted for students and a listener to practice with feedback before the storytelling event. For some students, the storytelling may be the key to help them integrate story components and become more critical readers (Peck, 1989).

Story Mapping

A story map is a graphic representation of all or part of the elements of a story and the relationship between them. Story maps provide a practical means of helping children organize story content into a coherent whole. The ability to work with story maps may involve some instruction in text content and the

structural characteristics of stories (Davis & McPherson, 1989).

Reutzel (1984) reported that teacher-directed story map instruction that addresses text-content and the structural characteristics of stories, results in immediate comprehension of a story. The structural characteristics of a story are defined as the setting, characters, events, actions, consequences, and reactions.

Students will need instruction on a wide range of graphic formats. Story maps can be used to teach inferencing, drawing conclusions, locating information, cause/effect, and comparison/contrast skills. Teachers need to use judgment in designing story maps. It is advisable to work from literal to more implicit content when introducing story map models to students (Davis & McPherson, 1989).

Paragraph Frames

Students in the primary grades often have difficulty understanding and remembering content area material even though they readily comprehend narrative texts. There are several reasons why this may be true. These include lack of background knowledge of text concepts, lack of interest, and unfamiliarity of the organizational structure of expository text
(Cudd & Roberts, 1989).

Cudd and Roberts (1989) noted that paragraph frames may be used to help bridge the transition. They can be used to review

and reinforce specific content and to familiarize students with the different ways in which authors organize material in order to inform. With the proper guidance, primary students can be taught to complete expository paragraph frames. The teacher should begin by writing simple paragraphs organized in a sequential pattern because children are already familiar with signal words such as first, next, then, and finally. Cudd and Roberts (1989) suggested guiding the students through the following steps:

1. Write a simple paragraph about a topic that lends itself to sequential ordering using clue words first, next, then, and finally.

2. Copy the sentences in sentence strips.

3. Review the topic and logical sequence of events.

4. Arrange sentence strips in sequential order.

5. Read the completed paragraph together.

6. Copy the sentence strips in sequential order to form a paragraph.

7. Illustrate an important aspect of the paragraph.

Marshall (1984) suggested the final step is important because research shows information presented with pictorial support is remembered more completely.

After practicing sequential organization with a full paragraph, the teacher gradually begins letting children fill in their own supporting information with the content of a framed

paragraph. During the teacher modeling process, blanks within the paragraph frame should be completed using responses elicited from the students. After the prewriting phase of instruction, children use the frame as a guide for writing their own paragraphs by copying the frame on a separate sheet of paper and completing it with their own response (Cudd & Roberts, 1989).

Teacher-Directed Questioning

Weaver (1988) noted that the typical teacher-directed questioning sessions following a reading activity offer limited utility of critical thinking. Often this questioning puts students on the spot as they attempt to discover what is in the teacher's head. Too often questions are only at the literal level, serving as recall questions. Teacher-directed questions should be challenging. They should focus on the major concepts involving students in evaluating the results, conclusions, and outcomes presented in the text. The questions should invite the students to project themselves into the issues discussed in the text. This type of discourse stimulates the student to contribute to the discussion because there are no right or wrong answers. Best of all, it involves the student on a personal level. The ultimate goal of teacher-directed questioning is to promote thinking (Weaver, 1988).

Samuels & Farstrup (1992) stated that the purpose of teacher-directed questioning is to help students improve their

understanding of text through the use of advance cognitive
organizers and question placement strategies. Text understanding
is enhanced through the teacher's posing of higher level
comprehension questions. Teacher-directed questioning is designed
to be used with expository text. It can lead students to better
understand concepts in exposition and to provide a framework for
dealing with the structure of the text. Directed questioning
should help students reach the goals the teacher sets for them and
lead to successful reading experiences that increase a student's
knowledge of a subject.

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Retelling

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Gambrell et al. (1987) believed that oral language
opportunities that encourage children to talk about what they read
appear to enhance reading comprehension. According to Koskinen,
Gambrell, Kapinus, and Heathington (1988), one instructional
strategy which engages students in verbal rehearsal is retelling.
The reader is required to organize text information in order to
provide a personal rendition of it. Even less proficient readers
can improve their reading comprehension by using the retelling
strategy.

Gambrell et al. (1987) reported that elementary students
engaging in retelling as a follow-up to silent reading did better
on comprehension tasks than students who produced illustrations.
They noted that retelling significantly increased the reading

comprehension of elementary age learning disabled students. Koskinen et al. (1988) concluded that studies suggest having students engage in the verbal rehearsal of what they have read results in improved reading comprehension performance.

Koskinen et al. (1988) suggested that teacher guided instruction can help the students become proficient at it. Teachers are encouraged to share a rationale for retelling with their students. Students need to know that retelling aids in developing storytelling skills and helps them check to see if they understand what they read. Koskinen et al. (1988) state that the retelling of text needs to be specifically modeled by the teacher.

According to Koskinen et al. (1988), teachers should work with a group in guided practice of the retelling process. When the group seems to have the idea, teachers can provide the opportunity for individual students to practice with a partner.

According to Gambrell et al. (1987), retelling is a strategy students can use when they want to better understand and remember what they have said. It can be used as an independent strategy when students want to have a silent verbal rehearsal to remember information they have read.

Prereading Strategy Follow-Up

An obvious postreading strategy is to follow-up on the prereading activities. This experience enables a student to respond, interpret, and evaluate their reading experience. If a

teacher has employed a prereading activity, to avoid follow-up could result in comprehension that is tentative, vague, and unclarified. The author's meaning could remain unattached to a reader's life experiences rather than become an integral part of a student's schema (Weaver, 1988).

Initial predictions must be confirmed, disconfirmed, or modified. Particular text samples could be noted where predictions were cued. Semantic maps or graphic organizations must be completed or modified as new information is learned. Responses to anticipation guides must be discussed, supported and evaluated. "What I learned" data must be collected and recorded for the K-W-L strategy. Student questions must be addressed and answered for the question-asking strategies. The questions generated from journal writings can be again shared and answered. The word connection strategy deserves another preview to see if connections made can be confirmed, disconfirmed, or modified (Samuels & Farstrup, 1992).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Ordinarily, comprehension proceeds so smoothly that one is
unaware of the process of "cutting and fitting" a schema in order
to achieve a satisfactory account of a message. It is
instructive, therefore, to try to understand material that gives a
reader pause, giving a student time to reflect on their own
reading process. This reflection time may enable them to identify
the strategies they are using while they read, for the
knowledgeable reader readily employs strategies to obtain the text
meaning. The lower elementary student is the less knowledgeable
reader and is in need of instruction. It should not be imagined
that there is some simple way to do it, nor should it be
approached in a haphazard way (Singer & Ruddell, 1985).

Just and Carpenter (1980) reported that reading is conceived
to be an interactive process between the text and a person's prior
knowledge. Teachers realizing the importance of prior knowledge
in comprehension will employ comprehension strategies that
activate relevant information before reading. Empirical studies
show improved performance when students receive instruction,
teacher-modeling, and ample practice with comprehension
strategies. Readers must be exposed to strategies which will
activate their prior knowledge, while interacting with text prior

to, during, and after reading text.

The topic of a text may evoke certain questions and predictions from a reader. Research points out that questions and predicted answers can tip the scales in the direction of a certain meaning whether or not it is the author's intent. Therefore, teachers must employ strategies that instruct and provide practice for students in developing their questioning and predicting ability (Just & Carpenter, 1980).

Samuels and Farstrup (1992) noted that educators can not teach reading the traditional way. Reading is no longer defined as a set of subskills applied in isolated situations to obtain the meaning of the text. Smith (1988) stated that educators now recognize reading is the application of many strategies that occur harmoniously to bring about comprehension of a text. Some of the strategies employed during the reading process include activating prior knowledge, arousing questions and predictions, making connections, summarizing, synthesizing, and interpreting new information. All of these strategies are part of the reading process and each chime in at the appropriate time for effective readers. Thus, Samuels and Farstrup (1992) suggested that reading instruction must make students aware of these strategies, model the use of each, and finally, allow students the opportunities to practice these strategies in the context of meaningful reading.

Pedagogical Implications

First and foremost, teachers should understand the nature of reading comprehension and learning. This understanding should be the basis for determining what strategies might facilitate the development of comprehension. Strategies should be researched, practiced, and judged by their ability to bring about comprehension. Teachers can judge the adequacy of a strategy by determining whether or not it enhances strategies already in place, activates prior knowledge, produces student-questioning, and allows students to interact with text to obtain meaning independently.

It is unlikely that a single strategy will be appropriate for all students in all situations. Teachers must be alert as to what strategies are already in place in individual student readers and encourage students to compare what they do in successful situations with what they do in unsuccessful situations. Students must be made aware of their processes already in place and they will most likely be receptive to new processes. This means teachers must allow sharing and ample practice time to explore new strategies.

If teachers are to develop a reader's comprehension strategies, the adequacy of their pedagogical practices must be addressed. The notions suggested in this review seem to repeat themselves: students need to learn "ways" to comprehend while

engaging with text; curriculum objectives must address the importance, nature, and influence of a reader's background knowledge prior to, during, and after reading; students must develop self-questioning and predicting ability; and teachers need to be knowledgeable of the empirical and qualitative studies on current comprehension strategies.

Reading is thinking. There are no shortcuts to teaching children how to think. If teachers are to help develop independent reading and learning skills, it should not be assumed that it will just happen.

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