Activity

- Read the passage.
- Try to determine what this passage is about.
- Make a list of the strategies you used as you were reading that helped you construct meaning.

What is Reading Comprehension?

- "Comprehension is the active process of constructing meaning from text" (Vaughn and Linan-Thompson, 2004).
- "Reading is thinking guided by print." (Perfetti as quoted by Greenberg, 2004).
- "Once thought of as the natural result of decoding plus oral language, comprehension is now viewed as a much more complex process involving knowledge, experience, thinking, and teaching" (Fielding and Pearson, 1994).
Outcomes for the Session

- Explore the impact of proficient reading on content area study and build a case for why it is the responsibility of all educators.

- Examine several instructional strategies for promoting content area reading.

The Reality

- Consistently, more than 2/3 of middle school readers fail to score at proficient on the NAEP (National Institute of Educational Sciences).

- Only 1 out of every 17 high school students can read and understand specialized information (Haycock & Huang, 2001).

- In a California study, close to half of college students lacked adequate preparation for college level reading and often required remedial English courses despite average high school GPAs of 3.19 (Pitts, White, and Harrison, 1999).

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“Students of the 21st Century must be able to locate, understand, evaluate, and use written information in their personal and academic lives. Their ability to do so will profoundly affect the trajectory of their adult lives. In an age where digital, academic, political, and social worlds are driven by written information, their capacity to make use of multiple literacies will be a determinant in how they live...their futures depend on it” (Fisher and Frey, 2008).
The Reality

- The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), recently adopted for ELA and Math in Maine, call for increasingly sophisticated levels of text complexity.

- The CCSS also provide clear standards for reading across content areas.

What Do Readers of Your Content Area Have to Do to Be Proficient?

- Think about the kinds of texts students read while studying the content you teach.

- What reading strategies help readers of you and your students construct meaning from these texts?

Automaticity

- What does it mean to be automatic?

- What does automaticity have to do with reading?

- Foundational Reading Skills (Surface Processing) vs. Critical Thinking Skills (Deep Processing)

- Knowledgeable and passionate content teachers are automatic with deep processing of their content, but students are usually not.
Constructing Meaning from Text

(Reading in the Disciplines: The Challenges of Adolescent Literacy, Lee & Spratley, 2010)

- The meanings of written texts are pieced together in the act of reading
- There are many sources of prior knowledge on which readers draw to form these meanings, such as knowledge of:
  - words and word forms;
  - sentence structure or syntax;
  - text structures, features, styles, or genres;
  - topics/content.
- Readers construct meaningful patterns of understanding from word to word, from sentence to sentence, and from paragraph to paragraph, looking for connections across these textual elements.

What Else Makes Content Area Reading Challenging?

- Vocabulary Gaps
- Need to Monitor Globally (i.e. integrate ideas across cognitive territory)
- Automaticity with decoding (surface level skills)
- Mixed messages about the purpose of reading

What’s the Purpose?

... it wasn’t like it was spread all over the place, like you had to read it. It was just like, if the “red square question” was here, you knew it was somewhere around that area right there. And you could just look for the answer and copy it down and you got full credit for it. So you didn’t have to read. It was something that you could like slide by without them knowing. I don’t know if they cared or not, but that’s the way everybody did it. You see the “red square question” and you sort of calculate where it’s around, you find the answer, and you write it down, and that’s it.”

—Rosa, a 9th grade student, describing her experiences reading history (Schoenbach & Greenleaf, 2009)
Traditional Questioning Strategies

Delores Durkin (1978) found that teachers often labeled asking students questions about the texts they were reading as being comprehension instruction, but this was really assessment of their reading.

Durkin also found that in over 4,000 minutes of reading instruction in grade 4, only 20 minutes focused on comprehension.

The Good News

Evidence suggests that reading achievement that benefits content learning can be greatly influenced by quality instruction.

(Calweti, 2004; Marzano, et al., 2001; Donovan & Bransford, 2005).

Successful Content-Area Classrooms

- “The ability to comprehend written texts is not a static or fixed ability, but rather one that involves a dynamic relationship between the demands of texts and the prior knowledge and goals of readers. It is precisely because of these dynamic relationships that the teaching of reading in the academic disciplines is so crucial.” (Lee & Spratley, 2010)

- Content Area Teachers understand that reading and understanding texts is central to students learning the content (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

- Content Area Teachers teach students to read and think like mathematicians, scientists, historians, etc.
Successful Content-Area Classrooms

Literacy rich content area classrooms include:

- A variety of instructional routines that provide guidance to students for constructing meaning before, during and after reading.
- Routines that help establish students’ expectations for what they do, how they do it, and why.
- These routines should include the teacher modeling how he or she makes sense of the text.

Three Approaches to Developing Reading Comprehension in Content Area Reading

- Build metacognitive awareness about what to do before, during, and after reading
- Develop ability to formulate questions while reading
- Provide intentional instruction about strategy use to support comprehension

Anticipatory Activities

- Purposes: Activate prior knowledge, build background, and set reading purpose
- Types:
  - Demonstrations
  - Visual Displays
  - Surprising Events/Hooks
  - Interviews
  - Advanced Organizers (synopsis focused on major concepts)
  - Anticipatory Guides
  - Thought Provoking Questions
Vocabulary Activities

- **Purposes:** Activate prior knowledge, build vocabulary necessary to comprehension, reinforce connections

- **Types:**
  - Knowledge Rating Charts
  - Pre-teach vs. Using Context
  - Morphology (roots, prefixes, and suffixes)
  - Inside-Out Strategy
  - Word Sorts
  - Word Walls

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Vocabulary Activities

**Inside-Out Strategy**

- Look at the parts of the word.
- Look at the context around the word.
- Put these sources of information together to determine word meaning.

Example: divert

Morphology—di means to change directions, vert means to turn

Context—Big Dig planners believe the tunnel will divert airport traffic away from the Central Artery.

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Conversation Activities

- **Purpose:** Provide interactions among learners to reinforce knowledge acquisition

- **Types:**
  - Think-Pair-Share (Lyman, 1981)
  - Learning Stations
  - Jigsaws
  - Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1986)
Modeling Reading Strategies

- **Purpose:** Demonstrate when and how to apply strategies

- **Types:**
  - Reading and Thinking Aloud (DR-TA)
  - Shared Reading (Allen, 2001)
  - Click and Clunk (Klinger, Vaughn, and Schumm, 1998)

Questioning Strategies

- **Purpose:** Teach readers to formulate and respond to questions that require critical thinking

- **Types:**
  - Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956)
  - Q&A (Questioning the Author by Beck, et al, 1997)
  - Question-Answer Relationships (QAR by Raphael, 1986)
  - SQ3R (Robinson, 1946)—Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review

Note Taking Structures

- **Purpose:** Recognize and capture critical details, synthesize main ideas, make connections across ideas

- **Types:**
  - Graphic Organizers
  - Outlines
  - Cornell Notes
  - Question/Topic Notes
Writing to Comprehend

- **Purpose:** to utilize writing as a method for strengthening reading comprehension
- **Types:**
  - Getting the Gist (Klinger, et al, 1998)
  - Combining Sentences (Graham & McArthur, 2009)
  - Graphic organizers

Ticket to Go

Resources