Building Comprehension and Community in K-8 Classrooms

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The DSC Mission

To help children develop to their full potential - academically, ethically, socially, and emotionally.

A Commitment to the Whole Child

ACADEMIC Achievement · ETHICAL Development · SOCIAL Skills · EMOTIONAL Well-being
Reflection

• What is challenging about helping students learn to read with comprehension?

• What is challenging about building community and helping students learn to work together?
Dual Goals of Comprehension Instruction

• To provide students with strategies to help them make sense of texts.
• To provide opportunities for students to work together and to develop socially and ethically.
A Tea
by Angela Johnson
A Tea  by Angela Johnson

The invitation said,
A tea for Mothers and Daughters.
I didn’t even tell Lucille about it
and threw the envelope into the garbage
can beside the TV in Dad’s office.
And I was happy when he found it
and looked like he might cry.
I’d stopped crying about being mom-free
but had to make sure nobody forgot it—
and in the end wound up with Dad holding
a tea cup and cookies on his knees,
talking with women
about dress sizes and their husbands.
Reading Comprehension Strategies

- Retelling
- Visualizing
- Wondering/Questioning
- Making Inferences
- Understanding Text Structure
- Determining Important Ideas
Reading Comprehension: What Works*

• Teacher-directed instruction in comprehension strategies
• Opportunities for peer and collaborative learning
• Occasions for students to talk to a teacher and one another about their responses to reading
• Large amounts of time for actual text reading at independent reading level
Social Values

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Caring
- Fairness
- Helpfulness
## Strategy Development K-8

### Comprehension Strategies

Nine comprehension strategies, introduced where developmentally appropriate

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- ○: Strategy taught directly
- ●: Strategy taught informally
### Social Skills and Community Building

*Examples of social skills and where they are emphasized*

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<th>Social Skill</th>
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<td>Appreciating and respecting one another’s ideas</td>
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<td>Giving reasons to support thoughts and opinions</td>
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<td>Using prompts to add to another person’s thinking</td>
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<td>Confirming that you understand another person</td>
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<td>Contributing to group work</td>
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<td>Giving and receiving feedback</td>
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BUT...what about Middle School?

....shouldn’t they already *know* how to read?
The Catch 22 of Middle School Instruction

• 70% of older readers require some form of remediation in literacy.
• Their most common problem is that they are unable to comprehend what they read.
• Text demands increase as students enter middle school.

AND

• Less time is allocated for literacy instruction.
What do Adolescent Readers Need?

- Comprehension strategies to unlock meaning
- Sufficient background knowledge
- Ability to recognize nonfiction text structures
- Purpose for reading
- Self-monitoring skills (metacognition)
- Vocabulary
- Engagement

Key Elements of Student Engagement

- High student confidence
- Meaningful choices of literacy activities
- Relevant and interesting texts
- Teacher’s care and encouragement
- Teacher’s knowledge of effective research-based reading strategies
- Teacher’s recognition of student interests

NCREL, Using Student Engagement to Improve Adolescent Literacy, 2005
Intrinsic academic motivation is killed off by academic failures.

Michael Pressley, 2002
Recommendations from *Reading Next*

- Direct, *explicit* comprehension instruction
- *Motivation* and self-directed learning
- Text-based *collaborative* learning
- *Strategic* tutoring
- Ongoing *formative* assessment of students
- *Extended* time for literacy
Harnessing Adolescents’ Social Energy

Adolescents need

• Opportunities to interact
• Prompts and language to extend conversation
• Skills for both disagreeing and reaching consensus
• Strategies for giving and receiving feedback
• Voice and choice in what they read, write, think and talk about
Grade 6 Lesson - Days 1 and 2

Day 1: Read-aloud

- Class brainstorms prompts to extend conversation
- Teacher introduces and reads *Train to Somewhere*
- Students discuss plot, setting, and characters in the story
- Students reflect on partner conversations

Day 2: Strategy Lesson

- Teacher reviews prompts to extend conversation
- Teacher highlights clues to inferences in *Train to Somewhere*
- Partners discuss inferences at various stops in the story
Grade 6 Lesson - Days 3 and 4

**Day 3: Guided Strategy Practice**
- Teacher reviews prompts to extend conversation
- Partners work with an excerpt to explore causes in text
- Class discusses excerpt together

**Day 4: Independent Strategy Practice**
- Teacher reviews making inferences
- Students read texts at their independent level
- Teacher models “Stop and Ask Questions” using why questions
- Students reread independently, stopping at 10-minute intervals to record why questions on sticky notes
- Partners discuss questions
Lesson on *Inference* - Grade 6

Video: Decide who will focus on

- The students’ thinking and behavior
- The teacher’s actions
Discuss the Video

• What did you notice about the students’ interactions?

• How did the teacher’s actions impact the students’ thinking and behavior?
Building Social Structures into the Classroom

Students develop socially and ethically through:

- Class meetings
- Cooperative Structures
- Learning social skills
- Discussing ethical issues that arise in books
- Discussing and problem-solving their work together
- Applying prosocial values to their interactions and lives

Cooperative Structures

- Think, Pair, Share
- Turn to Your Partner
- Think, Pair, Write
- Heads Together
- Group Brainstorming
Discussion Prompts: Explicitly Taught

- “I agree with _______ because…”
- “I disagree with _______ because…”
- “In addition to what _______ said, I think…”
- “I heard you say _________.
  Did I get that right?”
Why use Read-alouds with Adolescents?

Reading aloud:

- Supports deeper understanding of more sophisticated text
- Allows students to access & analyze texts beyond their independent reading level
- Allows time to apply strategies to a wider variety of genres and text structures
- Builds content-area vocabulary
- Provides an engaging forum for discussion
- Allows teachers to meet diverse reading levels
- Teaches students & strategies - beyond “teaching” books
• Build on students’ prior knowledge
• Create meaningful contexts
• Provide opportunities for practice and application through Cooperative Learning
• Ensure students have a safe environment
• Support with clear goals and immediate, corrective feedback
Individualized Daily Reading (IDR)

• Daily, sustained reading in texts at appropriate reading levels
• Students read up to 30 minutes every day
• Teacher plays an active role
  ▪ Provides a library of books in different genres and levels
  ▪ Helps students select books at appropriate levels
  ▪ Confers with and assesses individual students
  ▪ Teaches self-monitoring skills
  ▪ Reinforces reading comprehension strategies
Independent Reading: A Critical Component

Research indicates:

• Good readers get better because they read more.
• Poor readers become poorer readers because they read less.
• Independent reading in appropriately challenging texts with support leads to improvement in word reading and comprehension.
• Conversations before, during, and after independent reading stimulate deeper understandings and can motivate struggling readers.
• Kindergarten students are certain they will learn to read.
• Student indifference to reading is the norm by Grade 6.

*Stanovich; Kuhn; Allington; Entwisle & Hayduk; McKenna, Elsworth & Kear*
## Independent Reading & Reading Achievement

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<th>Percentile</th>
<th>Independent Reading Minutes Per Day</th>
<th>Words Read Per Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4,358,000</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>1,823,000</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>1,146,000</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>9.6</td>
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“Ironically, when teachers are pressed for time, independent reading is usually the first thing to be cut. Yet a carefully monitored independent reading program is the single most important part of your reading instructional program.”

IDR Libraries

- Authentic literature, fiction and nonfiction
- Selected to allow students to apply strategies
- Grade level sets: Easy, On-Level, and Challenging
- Individual levels and IDR resource book available
Making Meaning: What students say

Danielle, Grade 3

“Visualizing is like when you are reading a chapter book with no pictures and you get all of the ideas out of the book and into your own mind.”

Jessica, Grade 6

“When we were talking to our partners I noticed that my conversation grew, like I was using words I didn’t know I knew. The conversation lasted longer and my partner grew also and I learned a lot about my book and my strategies.”
Today
At your college graduation

I marveled

That I saw you last
In Junior High
Taught you last
In fifth grade

When I glimpsed
Your easy gait
From the bleachers

Recognized you
In cap and gown
Honor tassels swinging
recklessly
You were the same

Only six feet tall

Now
You'll work for a bank

I asked you
What I taught
That made a difference

And you said
“Nothing.”
“It was the way
You spoke
Of your big dog
And how
You treated people

Because as a kid
I needed
A reason
To come to school.”
Visit Brake Media in the Exhibit Hall

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