

Developing Active Strategic Readers

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The Basics for Coaching Readers

1. For comprehension:

- move towards asking students “What are you thinking about as you read?”
- Reinforce monitoring comprehension.
- Focus on making inferences.

2. For solving unfamiliar words:

- use the context, use pictures, phonetics to sound out or break words into parts.

3. Self-Correcting

- must self-correct when a mistake is made.

4. Developing fluency

- focus on accuracy and expression, rather than speed.

- **Reinforce active reading** – Remind students often that they should be thinking while reading. “*What are you thinking about right now as you read? Remember, good readers are always thinking as they read.*” Identify the reading strategies they are using – making predictions, asking questions, making inferences etc.

- **Intentional Practice**

Use short stories, picture books, short novels to intentionally teach and practice strategies and responding to reading. Choose texts that will provide opportunities for active reading. **Read aloud** times are the perfect opportunity for teaching and reinforcing what it means to be an active reader. Make the read aloud interactive by stopping at appropriate spots and challenge students to practice active thinking by **saying something** with a partner or small group. Then help them identify the reading strategies they are using.

- **Say Something** - Students silently read or listen to a section of the text and then turn to a partner to say something about what they have just read. It may be a summary, an experience related to the text, predictions, questions etc.

- **Developing Fluency**

Repeated Readings – students should read text at least 3 times to develop automaticity, which also leads to better comprehension. The focus should be on accuracy and expression, rather than speed.

Choral Reading - read together, with student matching his voice to the teacher’s voice. This is helpful when the student is reading in a halting manner, as it helps him develop fluency and he is more likely to use context clues to solve unfamiliar words. When reading with a student, stop at the words that could be solved using the context or phonetics and encourage the student to solve the word on his own.

Don’t Allow Finger Pointing at Each Word - When students are able to match speech to print, don’t allow them to point to each word as they read. It’s important that they see groups of words as they read, rather than individual words. They must learn to see at least three to five words ahead of their speech. Also, when teachers are reading a chart or big book, they should avoid pointing to each word. Instead they should do choral reading with a finger sweep under phrases.

Mark the Phrasing

Using part of a story, mark the phrasing for the students. Read the passage with the correct phrasing and allow students to practice.

The bear ambled into the woods to search for berries.



As students become more proficient with this reading skill, gradually increase the length of the phrases.

The grizzly bear ambled into the woods to search for honey and berries.



Prompting Students

- Read it so it sounds like talking
- Listen to how I read it to make it sound like talking. Now you try.
- Read groups of words.
- Read the punctuation.

- **Encourage Self-correcting**
 - Let students know it is okay to make mistakes while reading as everyone does so. But, they should also be aware they made a mistake because the word they said does not make sense or does not match the text on the page. They should be stopping to self-correct. **This is an essential skill.**
 - Give students a prompt by following with your finger and stopping at the spot where the mistake was made. When the student sees you stop, he should think about what did not make sense in the sentence and return to self-correct.
 - Another way to reinforce and help students focus on self-correcting – keep track of the times a student self-corrects and give small reward – stars etc. Or give student 5 check marks and take away one check each time he does not self-correct. Challenge him to keep all the checkmarks.
 - **Verbally reinforce self-correcting by softly saying “Good self-correction” as the student is reading.**
- **Monitoring Your Reading – Click or Clunk?** This is one of the most important strategies and should be practiced continually. After reading a section of text, students monitor their comprehension by asking themselves if that section **clicked** or **clunked**. If it **clicked**, it made sense and the reader continues reading. If the section **clunked**, the reader asks what h/she can do to make sense of the reading – defining words, discussing the concept, or re-reading. **Encourage students to use this strategy independently at all times.**
- **For students who don’t read for meaning - Stop regularly to summarize** – Determine whether the section read *clicked or clunked*. For fiction material, students learn to tell “Who did what?” in two or three sentences. For non-fiction material they practice paraphrasing what they understand of the text. This is especially important for students who read fluently, but don’t read for meaning and do not comprehend what they have read.
- **Take over the reading for a short while** – If you are coaching one reader, take over the reading when you sense the reading is becoming too laborious for her. This could be a time for the student to practice solving words using the context and/or phonetics. Therefore, stop at the difficult words that can be solved using the context and encourage her to try to solve the word. After a few minutes, ask the student to resume reading or she could tap your arm when she is ready.
- **Think Alouds** – During a ‘think aloud’, someone reads aloud, stopping occasionally to speak about his/her thought processes - stressing the reading strategies h/she is using. When the ‘think aloud’ is to be modeled by the teacher, h/she should pre-read the text and use sticky notes to mark the section and record the strategy they will discuss. Students can also ‘think aloud’, by putting up a thumb to indicate their wish to talk about the reading strategy – making a prediction, questioning, making a connection, or to discuss an interesting word. A set of strategy cards can also be provided, with students choosing the appropriate card to hold up when they want to share their thinking and the strategy they are using.
- **Prove It** – Ask questions that require students to **make inferences** from the text. As students answer, they must read the text that supports their answer.
- **Highlighter Pens and Stickee Notes** – Students use highlighter pens or sticky notes to mark places for discussion.
- **Turn and Talk** - Rehearsal strengthens thinking.
 - Students go knee to knee with a partner to practice purposeful talk and listening, thus rehearsing what they will say in the large group.
 - Partners can stay together for several weeks so they become comfortable with each other.
 - The teacher listens and chooses a partnership that has a strong idea to kick off the large group conversation.
 - For students who find it difficult to focus while listening – provide a question to consider during the read aloud, so they will be more able to participate in the *Turn and Talk*.
- **Visual Representation – for informational text.** Creating visual models of ideas within a text provides a means of organizing information into understandable wholes, and promotes the visualization of relationships.
- **RUN - For informational text**
 - R - Read and adjust speed** (read slower through difficult sections).
 - U - Use word solving skills** such as context, or breaking words into parts, or sounding out smaller words.
 - N - Notice and check parts you don’t understand.**

- **Ask Open-Ended Questions**

- *What are you thinking?*
- *What do you think the author wants us to think about?*
- *How does the author feel about this topic?*
- *How are you feeling about ...?*
- *Does this information fit with your thinking about the big idea?*
- *What is the author's purpose or point of view?*
- *What does this part show you about the character?*
- *How does the setting affect the story?*

- **Headings - Informational Text** – review how the headings and sub-headings are often in bold font and larger size.

- **Students Consider Headings - Informational Text** – Delete all the headings from a short informational piece and challenge students to figure out the main idea of each section and predict what the heading should be.

- **Graphic Organizers** – use graphic organizers to guide the discussion. Look at the text to determine how information can be best organized. **It is not always necessary to record information on the graphic organizer as this often slows down the process.** Use a blank graphic organizer as a guide for discussion.

- **Story Map** - Short stories can be organized outlining setting, characters, main problem and solution.
- **Plausibility Circles** - A circle is drawn for a particular setting or character and all the elements that belong in that setting or the personality traits for that character are recorded *inside* the circle. Information that would *not* make sense is recorded *outside* the circle.
- **I Wonder - I Think** - a chart with these headings will stimulate questioning and making predictions.

I Wonder	I Think

- **Characters** - charts with headings like below stimulate rich conversation.

What Character is Like	Proof from the Text

Why is this a round character?	Events that made this character grow

- **Comparisons** – use a data chart or Venn diagram.
- **Time Line** – to show sequence.