

A Historical Perspective of Literacy Practices: Guided Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is a cornerstone of reading instruction today. Historically, it played a lesser role in reading instruction. In the past, comprehension instruction has been shaped by theories and practices of the day.

A good definition of comprehension comes from Pardo (2004). She says that comprehension is when a reader constructs meaning by interacting with the text. That interaction is combined with background knowledge and previous experience, information in the text and reader reaction to information in the text.

There are Many Approaches Used in Teaching Reading Comprehension

- **Comprehension Frameworks:** These frameworks are research based. The research was conducted on the whole framework and how it is used together. The whole framework was researched together and found to be successful. Some important framework approaches are; QAR, TSI, and Reciprocal Teaching.
- **Strategy Instruction:** These are avenues for students to understand and recall what is read. Strategies can be applied from text-to-text. They are not dependent on the text. Students must learn what the strategies are; how to apply them; and when to apply them. Strategy instruction is modeled by the teacher at first. Then responsibility for the use of the strategy is gradually released to the student. Finally, the student can use the strategy independently.
- **Conversations:** This is a chance for students to practice thinking strategies. Students learn to listen and respond to what is said. Conversation is a way for students to share comprehension. Students also receive feedback to their ideas. They are able to clarify their thinking and then share again. They learn to monitor their comprehension.
- **Think-Alouds:** This approach offers a metacognitive aspect of comprehension reading instruction. Teachers model what successful readers do while thinking out loud to explain the thinking process that is going on. There are 4 steps for think-alouds. The first is when the teacher does (models). The second is the teacher does and the student helps. The third step is when the student does and the teacher helps. The final step is for the student to use the strategy independently and the teacher assesses.

Struggling Readers Present Difficulties for Teachers of Reading

- **Types of thinkers:** Some students have thinking styles that hinder reading comprehension. Specific strategies are necessary to remediate faulty thinking.
- **Six steps are used to use plan and execute intervention.** The steps are to plan what texts to use by monitoring text levels, have students practice reading, coach students, help students learn to listen to their inner voice, engage students in the texts, and retell to help students put the story together into a whole instead of separate parts. Teachers must support the students in decoding but not take away the opportunity for the students to solve the word.

Assessments

- **No Child Left Behind (NCLB):** These tests are mandated by the state. They are given on a particular day during the school year. They are important for the school districts to prove that they are meeting the state requirements. However, they are not useful for

classroom teachers to plan instruction on a daily basis or weekly basis. The results do not reach the classroom in a timely manner for the teacher to be able to make curricular decisions.

- Authentic assessments: These assessments are reflective of a student's daily work. The teacher gathers work samples of a student's daily work. They show the degree that a student is using reading comprehension on a daily basis. Decisions that are made are supported by these work samples. Modifications are based on learners' needs.

Key References

Applegate, A. J., Applegate, M. D., & Quinn, K. B. (2006), Profiles in comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 60, 48-57.

When teachers ask thoughtful questions, they can gain insight into the thinking patterns of their students. In this article, the author reveals eight distinct patterns of thought which can distract from a student's understanding of the text. For each profile of thinking, the authors offer specific strategies to meet the instructional needs of their students.

Au, K., & Raphael, T. (2005), QAR: Enhancing comprehension and test taking across grades and content areas, *The Reading Teacher*, 59, 206-221

In this article, the authors describe how Question-Answer Relationships (QARs) can provide a framework for comprehension instruction. QAR can serve as a starting point for addressing problems of practice that stand in the way of all students comprehending successfully.

Dougherty Stahl, K. A., (2004). Proof, practice, and promise: Comprehension strategy instruction in the primary grades. *The Reading Teacher*, 57, 598-609.

Comprehension strategy instruction research conducted with early readers indicates that there are many instructional approaches that can be introduced into in primary reading programs. This article outlines strategy instruction for comprehension. The strategies discussed in this article can be applied to many texts. Students must learn what they are, how to apply them and when to apply them.

Pardo, L. (2004). What every teacher needs to know about comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 58, 272- 280.

This article provides an overview of reading comprehension. It presents a model of comprehension to support classroom teachers as they engage their students in making meaning from text. Four areas contribute to the comprehension process: the reader, the context, the text, and the transaction. It includes a very good definition of comprehension. This model is used to describe research-based, practical applications for teachers as they provide support for comprehension in grades K-6.

Wilhelm, J. (2001). Navigating meaning: Using think-alouds to help readers monitor comprehension. *Improving comprehension with think-aloud strategies*, (pp. 93-110). New York: Scholastic.

This chapter describes the metacognition approach of think-alouds that teachers and students engage in when reading a text. The chapter outlines the steps that teachers may follow as they verbalize their thinking during reading.