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Introduction

The saying “Every teacher is a teacher of reading” is well known but not always true. It is usually regarded as the task of the English or language arts teacher to guide students through the effective use of comprehension strategies as they read. Although students read in almost every subject area they study, content-area teachers typically overlook the need for guiding students through their textbook-based and trade book-based reading tasks. Comprehension strategies best serve students when they are employed across the curricula and in the context of their actual learning. It is only then that students can independently use the strategies successfully when reading. Students typically read literature or fictional stories for English or language arts, but they will spend the majority of their adulthood reading nonfiction, expository writing. The strategies that students use to comprehend literature are different from those they use for nonfiction. It is important to note that around grades four and five, educators see a drop in reading achievement. At this time, students seem to lose interest in reading independently, spend less time reading for pleasure, and struggle more to read the materials required of them at school. It is for this reason that all teachers at all levels must actively pursue ways to greatly enhance their students’ abilities to understand reading material, and this can be accomplished by working directly with reading comprehension strategies.

How to Use This Book

Reading comprehension is a complex process involving interactions between the reader and the text, using multiple skills. Students need a variety of strategies to be successful readers. *Successful Strategies for Reading in the Content Areas*, 2nd Edition contains a variety of reading strategies that will help increase comprehension. This updated edition has grouped the strategies and skills to match the seven categories of strategies and skills taught in *Exploring Nonfiction: A Differentiated Content-Area Reading Program* (Teacher Created Materials Publishing 2008). An additional section, titled Developing Vocabulary, is also provided in this book. This book is divided into the following sections:

- **Monitor Comprehension** (including **Set the Purpose** and **Author’s Point of View**)
- **Activate and Connect**
- **Infer Meaning**
- **Ask Questions**
- **Determine Importance** (including **Main Idea and Supporting Details**, **Text Structures**, **Text Organizers**, and **Using Parts of the Book**)
- **Visualize**
- **Summarize and Synthesize**
- **Developing Vocabulary**



Monitor Comprehension— Set the Purpose

Strategy 1: Evaluating Purpose

Allow students to select books of their choice and have them identify many purposes for reading those books. Have students complete the graphic organizer Evaluating Purpose (page 26) by recording their purposes, identifying whether they achieved their purposes, and writing a brief explanation that evaluates why they did or did not achieve their purpose. Have students compare their evaluations with a partner. (Standards 5.1, 5.6)

Strategy 2: Text Coding for Purpose

A simple coding strategy that will help students read to achieve their purpose is identified on the Text Coding for Purpose activity (page 27). As students are reading, have them mark the text with a “P!” to note a strong connection to purpose and a “P” to note some connection to purpose. (If students are not allowed to write directly in the text, have them use sticky notes.) When they finish reading the nonfiction text, have them record the text information that corresponds with the code that they chose in the left column of the chart and then write a reaction to the selected text in the right column. Have students reflect on how the information connects to their purpose for reading and their prior knowledge of the subject. (Standards 5.1, 5.6)

Strategy 3: Question/Answer

Begin by having students identify their purpose for reading. Then lead them in generating a list of prereading questions that will help them achieve their purpose. For example, if students are reading about the history of baseball and their purpose is to understand the history and know why it’s important to the sport today, they may generate several questions, such as 1) Who invented the game of baseball? 2) Where was it invented? 3) What were the initial reactions to the game? 4) How do people react to the game today? Students should write their questions in the left column of the Question/Answer chart (page 28) and record the answers in the right column as they find them in the text. Remind students that in order to answer some of the questions, they may need to make inferences. When they have finished their charts, have them reflect on how the process of questioning helped them achieve their purpose for reading. (Standards 5.1, 8.2)

Strategy 4: Question/Answer/Opinion

Follow the same procedures as the Question/Answer strategy. However, this time have students also write brief opinions about the topics they researched. Some helpful sentence starters include:

- I was surprised to learn that...
- This information confirms what I knew about...
- I agree/disagree because...

Use the Question/Answer/Opinion graphic organizer on page 29 for this strategy. (Standards 5.1, 5.6, 8.2)



Monitor Comprehension— Set the Purpose

Evaluating Purpose

Directions: Identify your purposes for reading. Be very specific. For example, if your purpose is to be informed, identify specifically the topics about which you would like to be informed. After reading, determine whether you achieved your purpose and write an explanation.

My purposes for reading	Did I achieve my purpose?	Explanation
	YES NO	
	YES NO	
	YES NO	
	YES NO	
	YES NO	
	YES NO	