

Parent School

Newsletter # 1 Reader's Workshop/ Schema



...A Monthly Parent Education Newsletter to help explain the what, why and how of your child's new reading vocabulary.

OK, so how many of you parents are hearing new vocabulary out of your child's mouth this month? Words like Schema, Text to Self Connections and Text to Text Connections? Are you impressed? Well, you should be. Your child is doing some hard thinking at school and learning more and more that "reading is thinking." But, what does this all mean, you ask. Your child is receiving very specific comprehension strategy instruction in a classroom setting known as Reader's Workshop. In this format, your child watches and listens to the teacher read a lot of books while the teachers shares out loud and models what he or she is thinking while he/ she reads. Then the teacher asks the children to help in the strategy, and the teacher and children practice using it together. After about 5 to 6 weeks of the teacher releasing more responsibility of the strategy use to the children, each child becomes more independent at using the strategy and begins to use it on his/ her own. This year, your child will become proficient in six comprehension strategies throughout the year using a variety of texts and genres of books.

The first strategy that our class is currently practicing is called, "Making

Connections." This means students connect their background knowledge to the text they are reading.

The Purpose of the Strategy:

Readers comprehend better when they actively think about and apply their knowledge of the book's topic, their own experiences, and the world around them. Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis in their book, *Strategies that Work* (2000), state that, "When children understand how to connect the text they read to their lives, they begin to make connections between what they read and the larger world. This nudges them into thinking about bigger, more expansive issues beyond their universe of home, school, and neighborhood."

How to help your child use this strategy:

To help your child make connections while they are reading, ask him/ her the following questions:

- What does the book remind you of?
- What do you know about the book's topic?
- Does this book remind you of another book?

Parent School

Newsletter #2 –

Visualizing/Making Mental Images



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The comprehension strategy of Visualizing is also known as Making Mental Images or Creating Mind Movies.

Visualizing is the creation of images in the mind as the student reads, processes and recalls what has been read. Visualizing a picture or scene with the words and phrases allows the reader to organize the ideas, to see the relationship among the ideas, and to make meaningful connections with them. Using visualization and discussing the pictures to check for understanding and discrepancies help a reader increase comprehension.

Opportunities for students to discuss and share their visualizations of text will be our focus of comprehension strategy teaching and learning for the next six weeks.

Visualizing helps students to:

- bring personal prior knowledge to the forefront
- check their mental images against text for discrepancies and detail to gain a more complete understanding
- match language to the images and therefore improve their processing of ideas

- connect in meaningful ways to what is read
- assist other students who have little experience making mental images, to improve.

Graphic organizers assist students to visualize the relationships between ideas. Graphic organizers such as the following will be used to teach Visualizing:

- concept maps
- outlines
- charts
- list
- cluster maps
- comic strips

Graphic organizers are the best way for us to teach children how to organize information and make their thinking visible to others. They support students to connect new learning to a student's prior knowledge.

It is important that students continue making connections to activate prior knowledge well into this strategy of making mental images. The bottom line we want all children to learn is that everybody's mental images are different because everyone's schema for text is different.

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Newsletter #3 – Inferring & Predicting



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The skill of inferring is a skill we do all day long, similar to “reading” people or “reading” a situation. If it has been snowing outside and some cars have snow on them and some cars do not, we infer that those without snow have been parked in the garage. Inferring is not only about reading expressions, tones and body language, it is about “reading” text, often said as, “reading between the lines” where the answers are not explicitly stated.

Predicting is related to inferring, but we predict events, actions or outcomes that can be checked or confirmed as correct or incorrect by reading on or reading to the end of the story. I've heard it said that predicting is like thinking ahead but inferring is about looking back and reflecting about what has already been read. Predicting is like this, you are reading along, you stop and ask, “What will happen next?” Inferring is like this, you are reading along, you stop and ask, “I wonder what the author meant?”

Inferences are more open-ended and often uncheckable meaning that the reader is unable to truly know if an inference is correct. When students read, think and make an inference about text they have just read, they must use their schema, and prior knowledge and cross-check it with clues and evidence from the text.

When students use the strategy of inferring, they are making meaning of the text. They are adding pieces that are not explicitly there, often sharing personal opinions and forming interpretations. As children begin to make inferences out loud, they must be recognized for doing so and be told all day long, “You just made an inference!” When asking a student simple recall questions, some children feel like they are answering wrong if they don't use words that are exactly in the text, when they are actually using inferring.

Another way, I explain it kids is like this, something happens on one page of the book and then you turn the page and ask what just happened, as if somebody ripped out the middle page and you must decide what happened.

When you infer, you might say:
I think that...because...
Maybe it means...because...
My clues from the text are...my schema is...so I infer that...
It could mean...because...

Good books to read to your child to practice inferring are:

- Something Beautiful*
- Big Al*
- The Royal Bee*
- Tight Times*
- Because of Winn Dixie*

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Newsletter #4 – Questioning

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- Questions help a reader clarify ideas and deepen understanding.
- If you ask questions as you read, you are awake, you are thinking.
- Diving in with questions—even those that are unanswerable—enriches the reading experience.
- In their quest to make sense of their world, they bombard those around them—young children are master questioners. Why are there clouds? Do fish sleep? Why is the sky blue? Frequently, parents have no idea how to answer these endless questions. In desperation they might change the subject or come up with a feeble dodge to get off the hook. In fact, those questions show a child's brilliance. As a parent, you want to encourage them to ask the real questions, those questions that really puzzle them, even if you can't answer them.
- Wonder keeps the imagination alive and curiosity well-tuned.
- Asking questions is how you make sense of the world.
- Questions lead you to new ideas, new perspectives, and additional questions.
- Some questions don't have easy answers. But all questions inspire thinking, generate discussion, or lead you to other sources.
- Share *your* questions with your child, showing him/her that even *you* have questions when you read.
- Encourage your child to ask questions as he read is part of a larger task: inspiring wonder. There are so many things to wonder about: I wonder what a black hole is. I wonder why people risk their lives to climb Mt. Everest. I wonder how life began...Before you start reading a book with your child, play the "I Wonder" game.
- Questions send readers on quests. They cause readers to seek, pursue and search for answers or deeper understanding.
- Help your child fall in love with the story—share the excitement. Questions keep you turning the pages to find out what happens next.
- There's no doubt about it: Kids love to generate their own questions! Questioning makes reading fun. But to know how to question, your child needs to hear *your* questions first. This is not about asking your child questions. Instead, it's about modeling what it means to be curious by sharing the questions *you* have while you read. Don't rush the answers right away. Pose several questions and then let your child take a turn asking questions that come to his/her mind. You're showing your child how to be an active player in the world of reading.
- This type of questioning is not intended to be drill practice where parents ask students a series of comprehension questions about the book.

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(p-ayr-int skool) ← pronunciation guide

Newsletter #5 –

Comprehension Strategy: Determining Importance in Non-fiction

close-up →



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Children learn to read and then they read to learn. The features of nonfiction help students understand the important information in the text, magazine, newspaper, textbook, etc.

<p>Nonfiction Feature #1: Photographs & Captions</p> <p>Nothing helps a child more than the pictures and illustrations used in the text. A real photograph and a caption describing it helps put the content of the information in real world context.</p>	<p>Nonfiction Feature #2: Table of Contents</p> <p>You can start reading from anywhere in the book and that section will make sense even if you haven't read the book from the beginning, look at the Table of Contents to preview each section.</p>	<p>Nonfiction Feature #3: Pronunciation Guides</p> <p>This feature helps students with unfamiliar vocabulary in the text. It helps the child understand difficult content words, and spells out the word phonetically inside a set of parentheses.</p>
<p>Nonfiction Feature #4: Cut-aways and Close-ups</p> <p>The clipart used in the upper right side of this newsletter shows an example of a close-up feature. It shows more detail or the inside view of the important aspect of the information.</p>	<p>Nonfiction Feature #5: Glossary</p> <p>The glossary is like a special little dictionary containing important vocabulary words from the book, and usually found at the end of the book, with easy to understand definitions.</p>	<p>Nonfiction Feature #5: Index</p> <p>The index is also found at the end of the book. It lists concept words in alphabetical order, and gives the page numbers where the information can be found.</p>
<p>Nonfiction Feature #5: Sidebars</p> <p>Sidebars are bullet points of information off to the left or right of the main text area. Sidebars are short with little nuggets of facts and important details.</p>	<p>Nonfiction Feature #5: Labels</p> <p>Labels are word tags next to important pictures connected with arrows as used above. Labels often identify the smaller parts of a bigger whole as when labeling the different parts of an insect.</p>	<p>Nonfiction Feature #5: Headings/Subheadings</p> <p>When an author wants to signal that important information is to follow, a heading or subheading is in a bigger, bolder font that the rest of the information as to say: PAY ATTENTION AHEAD.</p>
<p>Nonfiction Feature #5: Maps</p> <p>Maps are used in nonfiction to show location of events and place in time: examples are ship routes, birthplaces, hurricane paths, street and building locations, amusement park sections, etc.</p>	<p>Nonfiction Feature #5: Charts and Graphs</p> <p>By including charts and graphs to represent data visually, readers analyze information by comparing it with other important information in an easy to read format – often found in newspapers.</p>	<p>Nonfiction Feature #5: Comparisons</p> <p>When a nonfiction author wants a reader to understand relationship of size or put information in proportion, an author will use a comparison: A blue whale is as long as three school buses.</p>

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Newsletter #6 – Synthesizing



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The comprehension strategy of Synthesizing is best explained using the analogy of a moving car merging onto a speeding highway. Like a car who heads down the on ramp, as soon as it merges onto a freeway of other moving cars, it must adjust its speed and lanes, whether it needs to speed up or slow down, it changes depending on the flow and speed of traffic.

The car is like our thinking. We begin thinking a story is about one thing and using our background knowledge to help us form that prediction. However, as we read on further, our thinking changes. We do not let go of our original prediction, but rather we mold it, and sculpt it into something new. By the end of the story, we have made a lot of changes to our original thinking and it has morphed into some new, bigger and different than it was....not wrong, just different and new based on our interactions with the story.

Another analogy— if our original thinking is like the rock we throw into a pond, the rings of that rock represent how our thinking changes; each ring affects the next ring and so on and so forth.

When strong readers read, they not only read the words on the page, but they listen to the “inner voice” that processes the meaning of the story. Strong readers use their schema, connections and other worldly and literary experiences to form new ideas as they read. Strong readers know that answers are not always found in the book, but in their head. A synthesizing reader uses details and inferences from the story and integrates them with their own ideas, evaluations and opinions.

Synthesizing is about creating something new from by bringing together many different pieces of information and continually changing our thinking depending on new information.