

Reading Skills and Dialoging

Teachers should be familiar with necessary skills to develop a competent reader. There is a logical sequence for implementing various abilities based on age, maturity and ability of the students.

This overview of reading skills is designed as a 'quick' reference for teachers, tutors and parents for developing questions and dialog related to specific abilities. Instructors are not required to be a masterful authority for all of the reading and critical thinking skills in order to question, probe and develop the vocabulary and mental analysis of concepts for students, young or old. The mere act of probing (also called playing the devil's advocate) results in verbal processing and making mental connections by students that build a foundation for an 'educated' person. Sample questions are designed to stimulate the dialog process and give the instructor a form of a mental crutch while personally developing a comfort zone for direct teaching. The stage consists of the teacher, students, common reading material, a reliable decoding system to process all words; and the library of man's knowledge to explore, understand and mentally program for future application. When dialoging and there seems to be an over whelming amount of topics and information, think of deciding on what is important and where should the discussion lead. Is the information you emphasize 'needs to know' or 'nice to know'? Spend your skills on the 'needs to know' for direct teaching and tactics for lessons.

Encourage Active Learning

Use the following tactics during class to ensure that students are actively engaged in thinking about the content. **Students should be called on randomly** so that everyone participates. When they do not know when they will be called on they are more likely to remain alert and engaged in the learning process.

Card Method: If teacher sees a need to be sure and randomly call on every student plus surprise the students, make a card deck with each student's name on one card. Turn the deck upside down and draw names for responding.

Reading Skills are listed and defined without suggesting a priority; a priority and 'needs to know' skills will develop naturally from the reading material, types of questions, and nature of the student responses and subsequent group discussion. This is a failsafe system for students, teachers, tutors, and parents.

Basic Reading Skills

- Following Directions
- Vocabulary-in Context-Discussion-Dictionary Reference
- Locating Facts and Answers
- Sentence Meaning
- Major Topics-General
- Minor Topics-Specific
- Main Idea and Topic Sentence-First, Last, or Middle of Paragraph

- Details
- Signal Words
 - Adverbs**-Where? When? How?
 - Conjunction-Adds Ideas**- and, besides, moreover
 - Contrasts**- yet, however, but, otherwise, unless
 - Gives Pairs of Ideas**-either-or, both-and, not only-but also
 - Gives Results**- thus, therefore, hence
 - Explains, Gives Examples**-that is, for example, for instance, such as
 - Shows Cause or Purpose**- because, since, for, in order that
 - Compares**- like, as
- Sequence
- The 5 W's-who, what, when, where, why & how
- Comparison and Contrast
- Cause and Effect

Reading - Thinking Skills

- Fact or Opinion
- Drawing Conclusions
- Making Inferences
- Reasoning
- Theme
- Author's Purpose

Activities:

- Know
- Comprehend
- Apply
- Analyze
- Synthesize
- Evaluate

Interpretive Questions

- Main Idea
After discussing each sentence meaning and visualizing key words (nouns) in first and last sentence, ask class to paraphrase the main idea giving reasons and examples for answer. If neither first nor last sentence reveals a main idea, search for word clues in sentences located in middle of paragraph and discuss 'key' nouns, their description, function, and implication for stating the main idea.

Students should summarize the paragraph in their own words and try to visualize key words in sentences.

(Visualizing=mental picture of a word developed by asking for descriptive characteristics and elaborating each description and function.)

- Inference Questioning

Students must learn to identify the main idea and provide an accurate summary before they can be successful with inference questioning. Questions that ask why or how are inference questions. See Jamestown Reading Skills and Bloom's Taxonomy. This skill must be practiced during silent and oral reading in order to carry forth references and events necessary to form a mental memory for comprehension and other reading skills.

Reading Program

The following 10 critical reading concepts are taken from the Jamestown Comprehension Skills Series with Writing Activities. There are 3 levels of instruction: Introductory, Middle and Advanced. The instructions, definitions and practice activities are outstanding and should be part of all school resources. Each topic will be stated with the definition that goes with the activities. For the purpose of this product, the middle level text will be used.

Understanding Main Idea

The main idea is the reason a paragraph exists. A paragraph is written to explain or expand a main idea. The main idea is the central idea, or most important idea in the paragraph. The concepts of **Unit of Meaning**, **Topic**, and **Topic Sentence** will be explored. (The approach in all 3 levels is to identify and give examples of a topic sentence and supporting details when the sentence is the first line, last line, or in the middle of the paragraph.)

Understanding Judgments

A judgment is a reasonable decision based on evidence. A reasonable decision is not the only decision. Different judgments will be based on the same evidence. To arrive at a valid judgment, you must:

- ❖ understand the information.
- ❖ evaluate the information.
- ❖ determine the writer's motives.
- ❖ examine the writer's attitude.

To make a judgment, you must read critically. The word 'critical' in "critical reading" refers to a type of reading. A critical reader identifies and understands the facts in a selection.

Understanding Characters

Characters are people in short stories, plays, and novels. You will learn to understand how people in fiction are made to seem real. You will see how a writer gives characters “the breath of life” and makes you, the reader, feel that you know them. Some methods of characterization are:

- ❖ the character’s appearance
- ❖ the character’s actions
- ❖ the character’s words and dialogue
- ❖ the character’s thoughts
- ❖ the thoughts and comments of other characters

Understanding Conclusions

Writers often mean more than they say. They do not directly state everything they want you to understand. They leave something unsaid, for instance, conclusions are left unstated. A conclusion is a decision or opinion you make that is based on the facts you have read.

Understanding Inferences

Frequently, writers omit the background information that underlies the statements they make. To get the most out of what you read, you must come to an understanding about unstated background information. You do this through inferences. People who can’t make inferences can’t see beyond the obvious. For the careful reader, facts are just the beginning. **Facts stimulate the mind to think beyond them.**

Understanding Tone

To understand what you read requires many skills. One of them is recognizing tone and responding to it. Tone is the author’s attitude toward his/her audience. A writer creates tone through the emotional quality of it. Tone reveals feelings, attitudes, and points of view. When someone speaks, it helps us tell whether the person is happy or angry:

- ❖ the sound of the person’s voice
- ❖ the choice of words
- ❖ the place of delivery

Literary Forms

You need to understand the term *literature*, recognize many forms of *literature*, and understand figures of speech. The term *literature*, for all writing, treats human concerns thoughtfully. Literature deals with human experience. It treats broad ideas. Its wording is graceful and precise.

Organization and Understanding

Good reading is based on understanding, not on speed. Thus, quick reading may not be good reading. The main factor in easy or hard to understand text is based on how much thinking is required. The more complicated the writing, the harder your mind must work. A reader has 2 basic jobs. 1) to recall the details, 2) is to understand the idea. An important skill is the ability to see how the writer organizes facts. Recalling details is easier if you make summaries.

Significant Details

Details affect your comprehension of what you read.

- ❖ find the important details
- ❖ see the purpose of details

Some details are more important than others. Most details contribute directly to the writer's purpose. They are essential to the point of the writing. These are called **significant**, or **major, details**. Those that are less important are called **minor details**.

Here is a hint for increasing comprehension by finding major details. As you read, ask yourself these questions:

- ❖ Which details are essential
- ❖ Why are they essential

In other words, ask which details are significant. Then, ask what their significance is.

The Purposes of Details

Details are easy to recall when you know their purpose. Here are the main purposes of details, with brief explanations:

1. **to define** a topic or show what it is, as a dictionary defines a word
2. **to give examples** in an explanation, or to help a reader grasp a broad topic
3. **to describe** so that a reader can "see" the topic
4. **to give reasons** for an opinion or a fact
5. **to explain** a fact or idea
6. **to set a tone or mood**, usually in a story and sometimes in a biography
7. **to show character** directly or through the character's words, actions, or thoughts
8. **to advance the story**, either the plot in fiction or the true events in history or other nonfiction.

You do not have to memorize these definitions. You do not have to memorize the types of details either. The important skills are these:

- ❖ telling the major details from the minor details
- ❖ deciding what the purpose of those details is

Understanding Vocabulary

One way of figuring out a new word is by looking at the words around it. This is called using *context* clues. Another way to decode a new word is to break it into parts. The basic part of the word is the **root**. **Prefixes** are added to the beginning of the word. **Suffixes** are added to the end of the word. Both attachments control the meaning of the word as used in the sentence.

Develop specific questions on the above reading skills; use one, then two, and then three, to acquire a reference and practice for dialoging. Teachers must possess the knowledge or be aware of specific reading skills in order to go beyond the one question. Teachers may also gain knowledge about questioning and probing through “doing”, as many teachers have not been required to develop such skills. With experience, a well prepared teacher could conduct a probing dialog using a picture drawn by a student as well as reading a challenging story.

Other Sources:

- . **Literal Meaning** – Answers to the **5 Ws** and **H** are the **literal** meanings of a text. **Locating details** relating the **sequence of events** and recognizing **cause-effect** is the processes for explaining the 5 Ws.

Literary devices: Allows characters to move and exist in a logical way. Following are 3 main literary devices:

- (1) Time and sequence, which includes flashbacks -

Foreshadowing – A method to alert reader that an event or series of events is about to happen in the story’

- (2) **Figurative language** – Allows author to describe the story and ideas with words that are powerful and helps readers experience feelings about the story.

- (3) **Opposites / Contrasts** – Characters can exist in contrast to make different traits more noticeable. Simple contrast for both characters and situations are:

Good & Evil, Wealthy & Poor, Happy & Sad, Desert & Snow, Country & City, Old & New, etc.

Language Skills to Clarify & Dialog

To develop reading comprehension and critical thinking skills, questions should be specific regarding grammar, punctuation, parts of speech, and all reading skills associated with processing texts.

Language:

- **Punctuation marks** –period, comma, question mark, exclamation mark, colon, semicolon, hyphen, parenthesis, quotation marks
- **Capitalization**-people, places and things-(there is a long list)
- **Parts of Speech**-nouns, pronouns, (pronoun referent), verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, and articles
- **Types of Sentences-**

Declarative-makes a statement and ends with a period.

Imperative-gives a command or makes a request. Most end with a period-strong command with an exclamation point

Interrogatory-asks a question and ends with a question mark.

Exclamation-shows excitement or expresses strong feelings and ends an exclamation point.

If question is stated and no one has the answer, stop and teach. Give a definition of the answer and call on students to supply samples. If samples are given, ask other students if they agree or not. Ask why or why not, defend their answer and do same with other students.

Using this approach to reading and language instruction eliminates the need for most types of “methods” references. However, there are a few very basic strategy references that produce dynamite results:

The Dominance Factor By Carla Hannaford, Ph.D Demonstrates how anyone can test for dominance and what their findings mean for curriculum and lessons. Once you understand the concepts then understanding their natural learning styles and why it is critical for remediation. (Some left eye dominant persons are often identified as Dyslexic, which is very inaccurate.)

Jamestown Comprehension Skills Series with Writing Activities-3rd Edition – Kit 10 topics, each level beginning, middle, and advanced. Lessons and activities for developing reading skills, enhanced by ease of teaching with silent or oral reading are excellent and recommended as a reference in every school.

Mapping Inner Space By Nancy Margulies, M.A. Provides a process for students to recreate their own mental frames of reference using stick drawings; and numerous activities that relate to research recommendations for learning and concept development.

Visualizing and Verbalizing By Nanci Bell Visualization abilities are very necessary skills for comprehension and thinking abilities. Incorporate the activities in your dialoging for maximum reading/ language development.

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