

Lessons in Comprehension: Creating Space for Reading Instruction

Dr. Frank Serafini

www.frankserafini.com

Assertions About Reading and Reading Instruction

As children learn HOW to read, they also learn what reading IS.
What counts as proficient reading is defined through the expectations and practices enacted in our classrooms.

What is Reading and Reading Comprehension ?

Behaviorist / Performance Models

Reading as Oral Performance
Reading as Decoding
Reading as Literal Recall

Constructivist Models

Reading as Constructing Meaning *from* text
Reading as a Process of Constructing Meaning *with* Text
Reading as a Process of Constructing Meaning *with Texts in a Social Context*

Challenges With Oral Performance, Decoding, Literal Recall

Focuses on correctness and accuracy, rather than thinking and interpretation.
Assumes a single, stable, universal meaning in a text.
Privileges the text over the reader.
Creates readers that can say words aloud, but may not comprehend.

Critical Dispositions

Readers understand that reading is a process of making meaning with texts.
Readers assume responsibility for understanding what they are reading.
Readers develop an awareness of their thinking when reading.
Readers are willing and able to recognize confusion.
Readers are willing and able to acknowledge confusion.
Readers apply comprehension strategies when meaning breaks down.

Effective Lessons in Comprehension ...

Are Focused Demonstrations of Literate Behaviors
Build upon the Knowledge and Prior Experiences of readers
Are Conducted "In Service of Meaning"
Call Conscious Attention What Successful Readers Do

Gradual Release of Responsibility / Emerging Expertise Model

Clarify Expectations
 (Full Disclosure)
 Describe Reading Practice
 (Explicitness)
 Demonstrate the Reading Practice
 (Making It Visible)
 Provide Guidance with the Practice
 (Scaffolding)
 Provide Opportunities for Student Application
 (Independent Reading)
 Provide Opportunities for Reflection
 (Literary Share Circles)

Comprehension Lesson: Interplay of Text & Illustrations

Symmetrical - images parallel the information provided in the text and vice versa
 Enhancing - illustrations enhance the text and text enhances illustrations
 Counterpoint - images provide information that is contradicted by the text

Comprehension Lesson: Reading Strategies Bookmarks

Choose appropriate text
 Select words to conceal
 Have students generate possibilities
 Ask Two Questions: Sense & Syntax
 Discuss how they figured out missing words
 Make list of strategies used for student bookmarks

Comprehension Lesson: Approaching a Text

Attend to Extra-Textual Resources (Inside & Outside the text)
 Activates Relevant Prior Knowledge
 Attend to Visual and Textual Cues
 Determine Significance

Peri-Textual Resources

Cover / Title - Fonts
 Dedication / Title Page
 End Pages
 Author Blurb
 Jacket Information

Para-Textual Resources

Book Reviews
 Author Interviews
 Critical Analyses and Articles
 Advertisements
 History of the Work
 Other Books from Author / Illustrator

Literary Demonstrations: Thinking Aloud

Explain what Approaching Means

Share Ideas as YOU approach the text

Use Language that Students are familiar with

Allow opportunities for student questions and reactions

Keep it authentic and in context

Guided Practice: Approaching a Text

In pairs or threes approach the texts provided in the same manner as was demonstrated.

Keep track of what you do, what works, and what challenges arise.

Be ready to report to the group about what you did.

Make Visual Display of Ideas

Instructional Trajectory

How the lesson will affect reading in the future in the classroom?

Look for indicators of use in reader response notebooks

Purposefulness / Relevance of strategy

Demonstrate continued strategy use during read alouds

Concerns about Comprehension Instruction

Comprehension strategies become an end in themselves

Most Comprehension Instruction is Comprehension Assessment in Disguise

Beware of Teaching too many strategies at once

Strategies are assumed to work for all texts and all purposes

The Expansion of Scripted Instructional Approaches

For Consideration...

Explore & Analyze Children's Literature More Frequently

Attend to Purpose, Why We Do Things, Not Procedures or How We Do Things

Maintain the Focus of a Lesson, Beware of "Over-Teaching"

Be a Reader First, and a Teacher second