**What Are the Seven Reading Comprehension Strategies?**

A "strategy" is a plan developed by a reader to assist in comprehending and thinking about texts, when reading the words alone does not give the reader a sense of the meaning of a text. In recent years, reading comprehension strategy instruction has come to the fore in reading instruction at all age and grade levels. By helping students understand how these flexible tools work, teachers enable readers to tackle challenging texts with greater independence.

Strategy instruction is rooted in the work of David Pearson and his colleagues, who studied the processes of proficient readers, and then sought ways to teach these processes to struggling readers. While there is debate about the relative importance of different strategies (or even if some should be deleted from or added to the list), most researchers and practitioners agree about a core set of seven strategies:

1. *Activating background knowledge to make connections between new and known information.* In many classrooms, this instruction is divided into three categories of connection as defined by Colleen Buddy - text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world (Buddy quoted in Keene and Zimmerman, 2007).

2. *Questioning the text.* Proficient readers are always asking questions while they read. Sticky notes (post-its) have become ubiquitous in classrooms in part because they are such a useful tool for teaching students to stop, mark text, and note questions as they read.

3. *Drawing inferences.* Proficient readers use their prior knowledge about a topic and the information they have gleaned in the text thus far to make predictions about what might happen next. When teachers demonstrate or model their reading processes for students through think-alouds, they often stop and predict what will happen next to show how inferring is essential for comprehending text.

4. *Determining importance.* In the sea of words that is any text, readers must continually sort through and prioritize information. Teachers often assist readers in analyzing everything from text features in nonfiction text like bullets and headings, to verbal cues in novels like strong verbs. Looking for these clues can help readers sift through the relative value of different bits of information in texts.

5. *Creating mental images.* Readers are constantly creating mind pictures as they read, visualizing action, characters, or themes. Teachers are using picture books with students of all ages, not necessarily because they are easy to read, but because the lush and sophisticated art in these books can be a great bridge for helping students see how words and images connect in meaning-making.

6. *Repairing understanding when meaning breaks down.* Proficient readers don't just plow ahead through text when it doesn't make sense - they stop and use "fix-up" strategies to restore their understanding. One of the most important fix-up tools is rereading, with teachers demonstrating to students a variety of ways to reread text in order to repair meaning.

7. *Synthesizing information.* Synthesis is the most sophisticated of the comprehension strategies, combining elements of connecting, questioning, and inferring. With this strategy, students move from making meaning of the text, to integrating their new understanding into their lives and world view.

**References**

Pearson, P. David, L.R. Roehler, J.A. Dole, and G.G. Duffy. 1992. "Developing Expertise in Reading Comprehension." In S. Jay Samuels and Alan Farstrup, eds. *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction*, 2nd Edition. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

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