Multimodal Ways of Teaching and Applying Effective Comprehension Strategies

Text-based Discussion: Scaffolds, mediates the use of strategic reading
  • Open, sustained discussion of reading content → increased ability to think about & learn from text (Gunning, 2010)
    • Before, during, and after reading
    • During-reading discussions are more effective than discussions after independent reading
  • Conversational vs. interrogational (Allington, 2002)
  • Discuss ideas, concepts, hypotheses, responses with one another
  • Teacher-directed text discussions
  • Especially if higher order/ open-ended questions are posed
  • Student-directed text discussions
  • Fosters engagement with text, self-confidence
  • Student-teacher sharing of strategies/ responses
  • Book talks/ literature circles/ Socratic seminars
  • Aids understanding and interpretation of text

Making Connections/ Activating Prior Knowledge
  • Very important factor influencing learning
  • Schema
  • Network of ideas/ concepts connected by causal-logical relationships
  • Fit new information into existing schema/ build new schema
  • Requires higher level thinking
  • Need help activating schema, knowing which schema to activate, establishing links (connections) between existing schema, knowing how / when to build new schema
    • Ask causal (“Why…?”) questions to build connections
    • Before reading (Preparational Strategy)
    • Text-to-self connections
    • Spend ample time here, preparing to read
    • During reading
    • Text-to-self connections
    • Continually connect to text to avoid getting distracted with personal experiences
    • After reading
    • Discuss how connecting to background knowledge helped to understand the story
    • Text-to-Self, Text-to-World, Text-to-Text
    • Graphic organizers, Venn diagrams

Predicting
  • When?
  • Before and during reading (Preparational strategy)
  • Why?
  • Activates prior knowledge
  • Aids recall of text
  • Sets a purpose for reading/ motivates
  • Prepares reader to construct meaning
  • How?
  • Base on experiences & textual clues; justify
    • “I predict_______ because__________.
    • Read to check/ modify or make new predictions
• Model/ think-aloud
• Draw/dramatize predictions
• Think-pair-share

**Questioning**
• Good readers are curious.
• Ask questions/ identify wonderings before, during, and after reading
• “I wonder…”
• Purposes
  • To clarify
  • To predict/ speculate
• To locate answers
  • To gain information about the reading text, author’s purpose, etc.
• To set a purpose for the reading
• Use titles, headings, captions, graphics to aid in generating questions
• Record questions/ wonderings in a graphic organizer
• Discuss/ compare with peers’ questions

**Visualizing**
• Easy strategy to teach; quick payoff
• When? During and after reading
• Why? Helps the brain link to schema, organize, and remember what is read (Hoban & Ormer, 1970; Katsioloudis, 2007; Pinion, 1999)
  • Still pictures/ “movies”
  • How? Adapt visualizations based on text description.
  • Confirm whether the text matches their image.
  • Use very descriptive texts
  • After reading, close eyes and create a mental picture
  • Use all senses (mind’s eye/nose/ears/tongue/fingers)
  • Apply a fix-up strategy if unable to visualize
  • Refer back to the reader’s still picture/ movie in the mind
  • Have students draw pictures of what has been read/ create symbols for characters, concepts, vocabulary
• Follow-up discussion of the personal interpretation
• Dramatize the mind’s scene

**Summarizing**
• Most effective strategy of all
• Most difficulty; takes longest to develop
• Builds upon main idea + supporting details
• When?
• During and after reading
• Why?
• Increases retention → improves comprehension
• Aids in understanding text structure
• Aids in writing about reading
• Is a metacognitive means of monitoring
• Checks for comprehension
• How?
• Through much modeling/ scaffolding
• begin with retelling → Oral → written
• 1 sentence → 2 sentences → multiple sentences
• Use titles, headings, time-order clues, topic sentences/main ideas
• Begin with short texts
• Graphic organizers
• Cooperative summaries
• Student-created songs, raps, ditties
• Projects/artwork/dioramas
• Technology: blogs, wikis, podcasts
• Drama
• Movie posters

• Graphic organizers
• Student-written songs, raps, ditties
• Projects, artwork, dioramas
• Technology: blogs, wikis, podcasts
• Drama
• Student-written drama scripts

Inferring
• Most important elaboration strategy
• 2 types:
  • Schema based & text-based
• When?
• During and after reading
• Why?
• Aids in making connections
• Is a higher level thinking skill
• Build/activate background knowledge
• Refer to text: justify
• Ask “What makes you think that?”
• Through explicit, direct instruction
• Modeling with gradual release
• Ask inference question, show how to find clues in text to answer it
• Concrete → abstract
• Use class discussion—in reading & content areas
• Artifact inferences (History Detectives)
• History Scene Investigations (McIntyre, 2011)

Comprehending Multimodal Texts (Hassett & Curwood, 2010)
• traditional print books with multimodal communication
• Typeset
• Color
• Font
• images
• Interactive text/narration
• Multiple, sometimes unexpected, perspectives
• Comprehension/consumption of multimodal texts → production of multimodal texts
• Multiple Text types (New London Group, 1996)
• Any form of print in any genre
• Gestures
• Drama
• Visual/Art/Design
• Digital
• The Internet, video games, email, etc.
• Linguistic/ Verbal/ Audio
• Face-to-face interactions

Story/ Content Review Baseball

Rules
Rules are similar to baseball. There are 2 teams; each team gets a turn “at bat” with one team member at a time “batting” or answering a question. An incorrect answer equals an out; each team is allowed 2 outs before the opposing team gets to “bat”. If a “batter” answers a question correctly, he/she proceeds to first base. Players progress through the bases as other team members answer their question correctly. When a play makes it to home base, a run is scored for the team. At the end of the playing period the team with the most runs wins.

Procedure
Divide the class into 2 teams. Establish points in the room to represent first, second, third and home bases. The teacher determines which team is “in” first by a coin toss. The teacher asks questions that the students have written during the reading of a specified text. Play proceeds according to rules for either a specified amount of time or until a pre-determined amount of time/ innings has elapsed.

History Detective
A history detective activity is an opportunity to practice drawing conclusions while handling historical “artifacts”. The artifacts can be authentic or reproduction. The emphasis is not on whether or not the artifact is genuine, but on the process of drawing conclusions from the artifacts. The activity should be planned after students have had explicit instruction on drawing conclusions from a set of facts or evidence. The activity can be adapted to any unit of study just by changing the artifacts and is particularly suited for a lesson on how we learn about the past or the job of an archaeologist. The example given is from a unit on Native Americans

Materials needed:
4-6 different Native American artifacts, depending on the number of groups you have
(examples: projectile points, stone fishing hooks, stone implements such as grinding stones, ax, hoe, or knife blades, scrapers, pottery bowls or shards, clay pipes, beads, sea shells)

Evidence sheet for recording conclusions

Procedure:
Explain to the class that they are going to be history detectives. History detectives, like crime detectives, use clues from evidence they find to solve mysteries. The clues they study come from artifacts which people have left behind in the past. They have to use the clues to figure out who might have owned it, what happened or what activity was going on. Demonstrate by showing one artifact to the class and asking what it tells them about the people who made or used it. Ask them to explain the reasoning behind their conclusions and if the class agrees that they are logical conclusions, write it on the board. Divide the class into small groups of 3-4 students. The smaller the group, the more opportunity students get to handles and study the artifact and talk among themselves. Give each group an artifact to study and an evidence sheet to write their conclusions on. Each group should be prepared to share their conclusions and reasoning with the class. Allow time for each group to complete
the task, and then call the groups back. Have a spokesperson for the group share their artifact and conclusions. An alternative would be to have the artifacts rotate to each group so that they get a chance to study and draw conclusions from all the artifacts, then groups can compare their conclusions.

History Scene Investigations
A History Scene Investigation, or HSI, is an activity based on the popular television series, CSI, and is designed to promote critical thinking (McIntyre. 2011). First, a scene from history is chosen. Set the scene with as many authentic looking props as possible, choosing an area of the room that allows room for students to move about to examine the “artifacts”. Then allow groups of 4-5 students to have a turn visiting the history scene. The goal is to use the artifacts in the scene to draw conclusions about what was happening and who was there.

Like detectives, students will record the clues, or artifacts, and the conclusions they draw from them on a prepared evidence sheet. Detectives gather evidence from the crime scene and piece the clues together in the crime lab. Likewise, students will take their evidence sheet to their lab (their desks) and use the evidence and their conclusions to form a hypothesis. The hypothesis should be a statement explaining what they think happened at the scene, which was there, and possibly pinpointing the exact event in history. The HSI may be designed around a specific event in history that can be identified or a broad time period that students can generalize about. The “who, what, when, and where” question stems can be used as a guide for forming a hypothesis. HSI works best when the class has an assignment that they can work on independently while not at the history scene or writing their hypothesis.

When all students have had a chance to complete their investigations, bring the class together to discuss the conclusions they drew based on the artifacts and the hypotheses they made. Keep a running list of all conclusions on the board and write class hypothesis that the majority of students agree with. The HSI activity can be used at any point during a unit of study. Some are particularly good to introduce a unit, especially if you explain that when detectives work with the evidence in their labs, they sometimes left with more unanswered questions that may only be answered through investigating other sources. The final step of the activity can then be writing a list of questions that students may have about the history scene. These questions can then build anticipation for the new unit by explaining that they may learn the answers during the unit of study.

Evidence Sheet

Sample of Multimodal Activities to Accompany the novel Ben and Me by Robert Lawson

- Draw a picture of your favorite scene, then write a summary of the event to go with the picture
- Choose your favorite scene to dramatize.
- Ben and Amos go to France. Pretend you are Amos – create a postcard depicting a scene from France (i.e. a famous landmark, the French flag or other symbol of France, French food). On the back write a message which summarizes what is happening in France (yours and Ben’s activities)
- Plan a Franco-American celebration in honor of the alliance between France and America during the Revolutionary War. Plan French foods, include the flags of both countries, and appropriate music.
- Make a sculpture of your favorite character. Write a paragraph outlining the character’s traits to accompany it.
- Choose your favorite scene. Gather classmates to be characters in that scene. Make a still pose and photograph it. Upload the photo to the computer and print it. Create a movie poster for
the movie, Ben and Me, using your photograph.

• Choose your favorite chapter/scene. Create a diorama to depict the scene. Then write a short summary of the scene to accompany the diorama.
• Write a poem about Ben and Amos. Experiment with various modes to convey your message.
• Choose your favorite character and write a song or rap about him/her. Perform it for the class.
• Write a drama script for a new chapter which follows the end of the book. Gather a cast of characters and dramatize it for the class.
• Write a script for your favorite chapter. Gather a cast of characters to dramatize it. Have it videotaped, and then create an i-movie.
• Write a radio script for a scene/favorite chapter. Gather a cast of characters and rehearse. Then record it using Garage Band. Edit the recording, add music, then download it into iPods/upload it to the class website.
• Create a graphic novel depicting Ben’s 81st birthday celebration.
• Create a newspaper to summarize the various events/chapters in the book.
• Create an appropriate name for the paper
• Each student writes several articles following the format of a newspaper article
• Take time to read newspaper articles and study the format of the genre
• Include a gossip column and a classified ads column
• Use a word processor to type the articles
• Import graphics/make drawings to scan into the paper

Multimodal Children’s Books Used
Meanwhile (Feiffer, 1997)
Froggy Gets Dressed (London, 1994)
The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales (Scieszka & Smith, 2002)
Black and White (Macaulay, 1990)
Sweet Corn: Poems (Stevenson, 1995)

References


