



Micro-Unit & Structure Tasks

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AND FOCUS

Initiating and sustaining focus to complete a task are important aspects of executive function. Students often read without a clear purpose or plan for reading. They can become empowered readers when they learn strategies for reading and are guided to make these into a regular reading routine.

READING WITH A PURPOSE

Silent reading, one of the most common academic tasks, is very difficult for many students. Students with language-based learning disabilities or differences who have difficulties decoding words or accessing advanced vocabulary and syntax often give up quickly in the face of overwhelming and incomprehensible text. In addition to specialized language instruction outside of the course's content expectations, they should be provided with alternative texts (e.g., audio, shortened, simplified) that deliver required content in a form they can access. Students with ADHD and executive function weaknesses may be able to decode and comprehend with little difficulty but may also give up quickly, or "read" without getting much out of the activity. Both types of readers can be empowered when teachers show them how to approach reading tasks by setting a purpose and making a plan.

For students to focus and comprehend while reading, they need to know the reason for reading the text (i.e., how it fits with what they have learned and will learn), what they are intended to learn from it, how to monitor their comprehension, and how they will demonstrate their learning. Answering these questions helps students engage their metacognition, or thinking about thinking. Metacognition is essential to successful and deep learning as well as to helping students monitor and sustain their focus.

One strategy to engage students' metacognition is to ensure they set a purpose and a plan for the reading task. Begin by having students ask and answer the following five questions. Students with learning disabilities/differences and ADHD often need guidance to answer these questions. At first, it is helpful to provide them with the answers to these questions. As they begin to learn the routine, they can be encouraged to answer some of them orally with guidance from the teacher.

1. Why am I reading this (novel, article, chapter in a textbook, etc.)?
2. How does this reading assignment connect to what I have been learning so far and to what I'll be learning next?
3. What specific information or ideas am I expected to learn as a result of reading this text?
4. How will I monitor myself to make sure I am focusing and comprehending what I'm reading?
5. How will I demonstrate that I have learned what I am supposed to have learned?

HOW DOES THIS MICRO-UNIT & STRUCTURE TASKS?

- Teaching students how to approach the task of reading assignments in structured steps helps them initiate and sustain their focus.



Example of guided questions for students who are first learning this skill:



Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading Activity for: _____

What is the purpose of this reading?

- Has my teacher explained why s/he assigned this text?

How does this reading connect with what I've learned or what I know we are going to be studying?

- Does the title or description relate to previous concepts? Is there something I already know about this topic? Have I read a part of this book already that might give me clues?

What specific information or ideas am I expected to learn as a result of this reading?

- Am I trying to find formulas, characters' names, historical events, overarching themes, etc?

How am I going to monitor my focus?

- Am I going to stop at the end of every page and check in? Am I going to time my reading? Am I going to check in with a partner?

How am I going to monitor my comprehension? (circle one)

margin notes • highlighting • two-columned notes • other: _____

How will I demonstrate my learning? (circle one or more)

write reflection • summarize notes • answer questions • discuss in class/with partner

(Remember to pre-read any given questions!)