



Provide Models

METACOGNITION

HOW DO WE DETERMINE IF A STUDENT IS BECOMING METACOGNITIVE?

According to Marie Clay, a renowned educational researcher, one way to determine if students are developing the appropriate metacognitive skills is to observe their reading and answer the following questions taken from her book *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control* (1991):

Does he try to use what he knows? Can he use [it] when...appropriate? Does he know what the task is about? Does he look? search? try to remember? Does he predict? generate? hypothesize? plan? select? check? monitor? test? change? recycle? recheck? Although the child has these sub-skills, can the child orchestrate their use to obtain the message in the text? (341)

If the answers to these questions indicate that the student requires instruction in metacognition, there are ways the teacher can model appropriate strategies.

HOW DO WE TEACH METACOGNITION?

As classroom teachers, there are ways to model and support development of those metacognitive skills involved in self-assessing comprehension.

Key Words

In the lower grades, teachers have utilized “discoveries about words” to assist students in the process of learning new words and committing these words to memory. These key words could be sight words, words from the novel, or common vocabulary words. As students increase in grade and maturity, the level of key words should increase as well. Students should be responsible for knowing and implementing the definition of these words while reading. One way to determine key words is to choose words that the students previously had difficulty either reading or understanding.



Talk to Yourself Chart

Because teaching strategies is just as important (if not more) as teaching the words themselves, students could be taught to follow the 6 steps of the “Talk To Yourself” Chart.

1. The word is _____
2. Stretch the word
 - a. I hear _____ sounds
3. I see _____ letters because _____
4. The spelling pattern is _____
5. This is what I know about the vowel:

6. Another word on the word wall like _____ is

Class Reflection and Analysis

Gaskins (1996) suggests that when students engage in reflective dialogue with classmates, they are better able to self-assess and develop those metacognitive skills necessary later in reading. So, give students time to discuss and reflect on what they have read. Discussions are a great forum for collaborative learning.

SMART Strategy

Developed by Vaughan and Estes (1986), the SMART Strategy (Self-Monitoring Approach to Reading) deals with clicks and clunks, which are discussed in the previous edition of *Spotlight on Language-Based Teaching*. The SMART strategy involves the teacher pausing periodically in the reading and checking-in with the students. If the material is clicking, the students should then explain in their own words. If the material is clunking, the teacher



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should review with the students to help them determine what went wrong and how to fix it. More on click & clunk here:

<http://landmarkoutreach.com/publications/spotlight/collaborative-strategic-reading-click-clunk>

FLIP

FLIP is a strategy proposed by Schumm and Mangrum (1991) that helps readers organize their predictions of a text based on its relationship to their general self and text knowledge. This strategy allows students to preview the text based on the following four decisions:

Friendliness: By looking at the size and length of text as well as number and location of images, readers can determine how friendly the text appears to them.

Language: Readers should sample the text and try to determine how many new words they will encounter and what type of words those will be.

Interest: Previewing allows the reader to think about how interested (s)he will be in the text once they begin reading.

Prior Knowledge: Readers should think about what they already know in relation to what they will be reading. This could be a great place to incorporate KWL charts or other previewing strategies. For more on this see:

http://landmarkoutreach.com/sites/default/files/spotlight/CSR_PreviewActivation_0.pdf

By following these four steps, readers should then be able to determine possible difficulties and brainstorm realistic solutions to those difficulties.



Five Strategies

After condensing research, Cooper (1997) decided that older readers need to employ five strategies in order to improve their metacognition. These five strategies include:

Inferencing

This asks readers to make a guess or judgement based on something that is implied in the text. Making predictions is part of inferencing in this model.

Identifying Important Information

This requires readers to make their own determinations about relevant or irrelevant information. Essentially asking themselves, “What is most important?”

Monitoring

This is the part that relates again to click & clunk and relies on students’ ability to clarify the information and know when material does not make sense.

Summarizing

This includes all of the strategies by asking the students to wrap-up or explain what they have read.

“Generating Questions”

The last strategy is important for active reading and comprehension. It allows students to engage with the text by asking questions before, during, or after reading. These questions support their learning through delving deeper into the meaning.



Expectation Outline

Related to generating questions, the expectation outline was developed by Spiegel (1981) and encourages readers to create a list of questions about the text based on their preview. After having read the text, the readers go back to see if they can answer those questions.

HOW IS THIS PROVIDING MODELS?

Metacognition is not an innate skill for all readers; it is not something every student learns and utilizes on their own. Therefore, metacognitive skills need to be explicitly taught and practiced in the classroom. In order for students to develop these skills, teachers should explain and model them. Through modeling these strategies, teachers can demonstrate what metacognition should look like. After modeling, students should be given ample time to practice these strategies with guidance and independence. The Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) Model focuses on teacher-driven instruction and modeling that gives way to eventual independent application of strategies by the students.

Adapted from Terry Underwood. "On Knowing What You Know: Metacognition and the Act of Reading." The Clearing House, V. 71 #2 (November/December, 1997), 77-80.