

Comprehension/Knowledge Building, Grade 2- 3

Introduction

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Good readers read with fluency. They move smoothly through text, effortlessly and accurately translating sound/spellings into words and linking words with their meanings. But good readers do more than just read words. They understand that the words they read work together to create meaning—that is, they read with comprehension. In addition, good readers:

- Are strategic readers who consciously prepare for what they are about to read, make connections between new knowledge and what they already know, think about what they read, and reevaluate as they read.
- Use specific reading strategies to help them understand literature and informational texts.
- Use their knowledge of text structures to help them comprehend.
- Learn to apply strategies and skills to get meaning from a variety of text types and to expand their knowledge base.

In this course, Kimberly Proby guides her second grade students as they learn to use the skills and strategies necessary for fluent reading, comprehension, and knowledge building. She continually encourages her students to take responsibility for their own learning and to stretch their abilities by preparing, questioning, and interacting with the text.

Teaching Example 1

Good readers rarely dive into a text unprepared. They have an idea of what they want or need to learn from the text. They know their purpose for reading—to learn, for enjoyment, and to find answers to their questions. They have an idea of what to expect, and they think about what they already know. At every step, good readers make connections between what they are reading and what they already know. These connections can be made on several different levels at the same time. Good readers may establish a connection between, for example, the text they are reading and their familiarity with the subject of the text, the type of writing, or knowledge of the author's other work.

In Teaching Example 1, Ms. Proby makes sure the students are ready to read a new selection by actively engaging them in several prereading activities. These activities are designed to help the students activate and use the knowledge they already have, supply them with knowledge that they need, and familiarize them with the text.

Although the selection is a challenging expository text, the students are comfortable; they know that support is always available, if they need it.

Prereading

In preparation for reading the text, Ms. Proby guides the students through specific topics of discussion and activities designed to help them approach the text confidently. Before reading the text, Ms. Proby helps the students:

- Discuss what they already know of the subject; in doing so, she helps them activate their prior knowledge. Note that Ms. Proby specifically asks them to revisit selections they have read earlier. This helps students recognize their growing knowledge of fossils can serve as background knowledge for understanding this new selection. Eventually, this becomes second nature.
- Build background knowledge through discussion of text types.

- Focus their browsing of the selection as they look for clues that will help them understand it, problems that might be confusing, and things that make them wonder. These lists will be revisited after the reading.
- Set their own purposes for reading.

All of these activities help the students become engaged readers who know before they begin to read what their purpose is for reading and what they can expect to learn.

Teaching Example 2

Teaching Example 2 demonstrates the next step in preparing to read a new selection and in building comprehension—vocabulary building. Ms. Proby ensures the students' success in building vocabulary and reading the selection by helping them understand the different ways in which they can learn new words.

Vocabulary

Students are taught to decipher the meaning of new words by using three main skills: word structure, apposition, and context.

Word structure: Students learn to look for prefixes, suffixes, base words, and inflectional endings.

Apposition: Definitions are often given in the text for words that the author thinks might be misunderstood. Students are taught to look for such help in their reading.

Context: Context can provide clues to meaning. The students are taught not only to look at the words immediately surrounding an unknown word, but also to go back in the text to see if there is anything that will help reveal a word's meaning.

Finally, the students check their understanding of new words by looking them up in the glossary of their student text. In this way, they can see how well the different skills worked in clarifying the unknown words.

Since the new words need to be used by the students in order to become part of their vocabularies, Ms. Proby ends the lesson by having the students choose words from the vocabulary list to add to their personal dictionaries.

Teaching Example 3

In Teaching Example 3, Ms. Proby and the students read the selection by engaging in close reading. In order to do this, Ms. Proby models the use of reading strategies that good readers use; she also prompts the students to use these strategies on their own.

Comprehension Strategies

Effective readers are strategic readers. They have tools or strategies that they use to help them understand text as they read. The comprehension strategies taught in *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* include:

- Asking questions
- Making predictions
- Confirming predictions
- Making connections
- Monitoring and clarifying
- Monitoring and adjusting reading speed
- Summarizing
- Visualizing

In this particular lesson, Ms. Proby and her class will be concentrating on three of these strategies: monitoring and clarifying, making connections, and summarizing. By helping the students use these strategies independently, Ms. Proby helps ensure their continued success as readers and learners. Although the class will pay particular attention to three of the strategies, Ms. Proby reminds them to use the other strategies they have learned whenever they need to.

Teaching Example 4

In Teaching Example 4, Ms. Proby follows up the reading of the selection with a discussion of what has been read. It gives the students the opportunity to discuss their reactions, clarify their understanding, and make connections to other literature and their lives. In addition, it helps those students who may have had difficulty by engaging them in dialogue with their peers. This gives her the opportunity to informally assess the students' understanding.

Discussing and Handing-Off

Discussion is a vital part of the comprehension process. Students share their thoughts, including any confusion they may have had while reading the selection. In addition, Ms. Proby takes the opportunities offered during discussion to model for the students how to identify pertinent information and disregard details that are less important.

As the students talk, they go beyond the selection at hand and make connections to the other selections they have read on the subject of fossils. This is an important step in knowledge building—the ability to connect information from various sources into a coherent body of knowledge.

The students use a routine called "handing-off" to keep the discussion going. Handing-off turns responsibility for the discussion over to the class. Ms. Proby becomes a member of the group rather than the controller of the group. As a member of the group, however, she takes the opportunity to redirect the discussion when the students get stuck on an unimportant detail.

Teaching Example 5

In Teaching Example 5, Ms. Proby and the class continue their work with the selection by rereading to solidify their understanding. In doing so, they will be concentrating on more than just basic understanding. They will be looking closely at the text to understand what the author expects them to learn or do. In addition, they will spend time discussing and learning about sequence and why it is important.

Comprehension Skills

Revisiting or rereading a selection allows students to apply skills that give them a more complete understanding of the text. Some follow-up comprehension skills help students organize information. Others lead to deeper understanding—to "reading between the lines," as mature readers do. Throughout the year, students will focus on different comprehension skills, including:

- Identifying author's point of view
- Identifying author's purpose
- Identifying cause and effect
- Classifying and categorizing
- Comparing and contrasting
- Drawing conclusions
- Discriminating fact from opinion
- Identifying main ideas and details
- Making inferences
- Sequencing

- Distinguishing reality from fantasy

Comprehension skills and strategies work hand-in-hand to help students become strong, independent, and thoughtful readers.

Teaching Example 6

In Teaching Example 6, Ms. Proby uses the ***Inquiry Journal***, one of the workbooks supplied with the ***Open Court Reading*** program, to informally assess the students' understanding not only of the particular selection they are reading, but also of its relevance to the unit as a whole.

Informal Assessment: *Inquiry Journal*

Informal assessment is an essential ingredient of any successful program or classroom. Ms. Proby takes every opportunity to assess her students' understanding of the skills and strategies that they are learning, as well as their general comprehension and knowledge growth.

There are many assessment tools available for use with the ***Open Court Reading*** program. The ***Inquiry Journal***, however, is uniquely suited for use in informal assessment. As the students move through a unit, they record in their ***Inquiry Journal*** questions they have, understandings they have gained, comparisons they are making, and information they gather as they do their investigation projects. Since the students record their thoughts and questions in their ***Inquiry Journal***, it is rarely used as a grading tool. It gives, however, a clear overview of each student's individual progress as a learner.

Please note: Ms. Proby is a second grade teacher and therefore, uses Level 2 of ***Open Court Reading***. Although the content is different in Level 3, the instructional methods used in this course can be applied to the Comprehension/Knowledge Building lessons in Level 3.