

Teaching Strategies in Reading

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1. Read to Learn, Learn to Read

“Reading is the basis for all learning.”

— George W. Bush

Reading is important. True. We read, and we learn. In schools, literacy courses (or language arts) help students to develop both reading and writing skills by virtue of various classroom activities. Reading is the basis, and writing facilitates students to comprehend the text and express themselves. For the most of American schools, a minimum of 140-minute is recommended for literacy class. That is, students are exposed to a huge amount of reading in school. So, reading skills is of importance for students to learn other subjects. Since they are not born to be capable of reading books, skills or strategies should be taught.

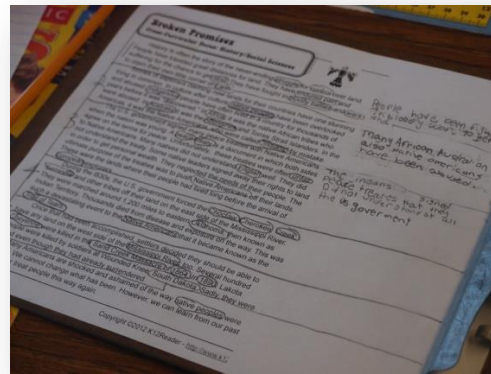
As teaching reading, teachers always seek effective ways to help students how to read. Some strategies benefits both teachers and students to get involved to the class activities and classroom interaction. Even when the students work independently, they will apply the strategies to their learning. Thus, some teaching strategies in reading will be addressed in this study.

2. Reading in Every Subject

As for a subject, content knowledge is important; however, if students obtain more reading strategies in the classroom, it is effective for them to gain more information as doing extensive reading. So, it is every teacher’s responsibility to teach students how to read since every subject requires reading skills.

For example, in a history class, the class was required to read two articles about the war history. Two articles, in fact, shared the similar viewpoints about wars. Then, the teacher helped students analyze the articles and summarized each paragraph. Then, students should

write down the differences and similarities on a sheet. Apparently the history teacher taught not only the content knowledge but also the skills to analyze in reading.



Another example is shown in a Grade 1 classroom. The teacher read her class a book about tadpoles and frogs. In addition to knowledge of science, she reviewed the growth of butterflies which the students learned before and asked them to compare and contrast the procedures. And the teacher and students worked together to complete a graphic organizer which was helpful to understand scientific information.

The point being made here is that not only language arts teachers but also other teachers need to pay attention to helping students understand what they read and how to read. Reading skills can be taught for different pieces of text, which enrich students' knowledge and critical thinking.

3. Balanced Literacy Model

Nowadays the Balanced Literacy Model is prevailing over most districts in the U.S.A. Balanced Literacy Model is used to strengthen learners' language proficiency, especially reading and writing ability. At least 140 minutes are required for students in Grades 1-6 to practice. However, since this study focuses on reading instead of writing, the components in reading will be presented in detail.

The reading lessons are composed of Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Independent Reading, and Read Aloud. The behavior of teachers and students varies according to the goals.

Shared Reading

The teacher teaches a piece of text in front of the class. In order to teach a specific skill or strategy or particular text type or genre, the same text is used for everyone, such as textbooks, large charts, big books, and so forth. The teacher directly interprets the text and demonstrates how to apply the skill to the text. Then gradually, students are encouraged to employ the skill to process the text by asking questions, think-aloud, prediction-making, and so on.



Guided Reading

Guided Reading is the most important and the longest stretch of time among the reading blocks. The small group instruction is implemented in class according to the students' proficiency level. The group size can be flexible based on the students' interest, needs, and experience. The major goal for the teacher is to help individual students independently



employ the strategies to process increasingly challenging texts. For instance, the students can use acquired strategies to identify unknown words or to build up the meaning of the text. Meanwhile, the students will experience the success because of the teacher's help and their consistent practice.

Independent Reading

While reading books independently or with a peer, students can self-select appropriate and interesting books on a basis of their appropriate level for comfortable strategy-practice. Therefore, they will have enjoyment of reading, increase fluency in reading, and build up their confidence as a reader. At the same time, the role of the teacher is to monitor students' reading, to motivate and model for the class, to provide a variety of reading materials, and so forth.



Read Aloud

During this time, students hear the rich language of texts that they might not read by themselves or they might not have ever chosen to read. The teacher read to the class on a regular basis. For students, they can enjoy listening, talking about the story, and sharing ideas.

In the U.S.A., the research illustrates that when the teacher implements the Balanced Literacy Model, it is apparent that the academic performance of students improves. And it shows that a learner-centered classroom is beneficial to help students how to work independently with more successful experiences when they practice the skills or strategies they required.

4. What Do We Need to Teach in Reading?

To facilitate students' reading comprehension ability, the teacher needs to teach students how to read a text in a right and effective way, including genres, summary, sequence, compare & contrast, the author's viewpoint and so on.

Genre

“Is this a fiction or non-fiction?”

“Non-fiction.”

“What is the clue?”

“It is autography because it talks about the presidents’ life.”

“What is genre?”

“Oh, types of reading.”

The students are taught to learn the genre of texts even though they are kindergarten students. After that, it is easy for them to predict and comprehend the organization of the text.

Summary

The teacher can help students gain the main ideas by asking questions, picture clues, graphic organizers or group discussion. This is a good way for teachers to evaluate students’ understanding.

Sequence

When it mentions about teaching of sequence, a comic lesson impresses me in a Grade 5 classroom. A female teacher adopted the concept of comic books to teach sequence, which really interested and motivated her students. Before completing their own comic books,



students were taught the story structure which consisted of characters, settings, conflicts, plot events, and resolutions. Then after group discussion, they made up a story and wrote it on a storyboard. By doing so, the students can understand the sequences and the plots and meanwhile they really enjoy this class.

Compare & Contrast

This skill can be practiced by means of paragraph writing, charts, or graphic organizers. It is beneficial when the teacher wants to focus on certain concepts among different texts.

The Author's Writing Style

The different books from the same author can be used to teach the same viewpoint. For example, in a reading classroom, the students read different Ron Dahl's chapter books. Then, by means of class discussion, the teacher pointed out that the author Ron Dahl liked to use many figurative languages in his crafts. Then, the students were encouraged to speak out more examples from the books they read.

When the concepts of a story familiarize students, it is not difficult for students to engage in discussion to figure out the meaning of texts. It is noticed that the teacher needs to model first and offer students more opportunities to practice.

5. Reading Activities in the Classroom

By means of classroom observation, some classroom activities are helpful to reading comprehension, such as *Turn and Talk* and *Working Stations*. They can be implemented for the whole class, groups, or individuals.

Turn and Talk

In order to reinforce students' reading comprehension, "Turn and Talk" activity is frequently used in the classroom and beneficial for learners. During the class, the teacher stops reading and poses some questions to students. While addressing questions, the teacher should pay attention to how to facilitate students' involvement, such as time to talk and the content of talking.

It is radical that sufficient time should be offered for students to think and talk. Students are encouraged to talk with their peers before sharing ideas in front of the class. If a student is required to give a response immediately, his mind may go blank at the moment due to his anxiety or his slow reaction. However, it does not mean that he knows nothing about the question. Thus, some teachers suggest that thinking for 15-20 seconds and then sharing ideas to group members for 2 minutes are good for students.



In addition, some strategies can be taught to help students construct what they talk which makes a more meaningful chat. For example, teacher can teach some sentence patterns and then demonstrate how they are implied to the reading responses.

I infer/connect/predict that...

I agree/disagree because...

Could you explain more about...

Why do you think that?

Maybe you are right, but...

If I were in the character, I would...

By means of an organized talking context, the teacher is able to monitor students' comprehension and meanwhile to help them to participate in a discussion.





Because of "Turn and Talk" activity, students have more chances of expressing themselves. Moreover, to keep asking questions is good to monitor students' engagement in class.

Working Stations

In the classroom, as the teacher takes charge of guided reading for one group, the other groups are assigned to different stations or centers. Each station focuses on a specific task. This is so-called “Working Stations.” Before the students begin to work, the teacher needs to give precise instructions and explanations for each station.

The stations are designed for students to practice reading skills by books, audio materials, computers, and so on.



Stations	What is the task?
Read to Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students read independently. - Choose books from their Book Bag. These books may be select by themselves or the teacher based on their language proficiency level. 
Read to Someone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read to your partners. - The partners can simply listen or operate while listening. For instance, some students show the sequence of the story by using puppets after listening. 
Listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to the story by using a headset and a computer. 
Computer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the quiz by using a computer after reading. 

The groups usually stay in one station for 10 minutes. Then, they rotate to the next station so that they can attend to different tasks.

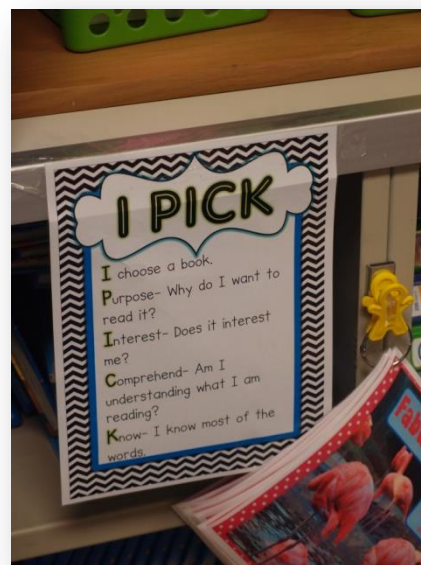
The diversity of reading activities can attract students and keep them practicing different learning skills, such as listening and writing. Furthermore, it is good for independent reading practice, partnership, and responsibility.

6. Teachers, Facilitators

Generally speaking, no one was born to be a good reader; we all need to learn to read. As a teacher, we still need to make more efforts to facilitate students to learn.

In Taiwan, some people assume that teaching reading skills is a responsibility of a language teacher. I think it is wrong. Reading happens everywhere, and every teacher has to teach reading anytime. For example, in fact we read fiction and non-fiction every day. Beside articles in the textbooks, we read charts and diagrams in math and science class. Therefore, our students can be more successful readers with instructions and help from teachers.

In addition to the demonstration in front of the class, teachers are encouraged to make the learning skills to a written language and then to post them in the classroom. When the students read, they can review the skills immediately and apply them to texts. Besides, the teacher can post “I Pick” rules in the reading corner. The written language is useful to remind students to choose a book and make use of the strategies.



Last but the most important, helping students to be an independent reader is the ultimate goal for teachers. A Chinese proverb says that, “Give a man a fish; you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime.” That is, what the students need to learn is strategies or ability to apply their skills to life. However, some teachers in Taiwan get used to controlling the whole class, including the lectures, classroom activities, and so on. The main reason may be disorder of classroom management. They are afraid of losing control the students. However, one American teacher mentioned that, “Even though there are still some difficulties to go through, students can be an independent learner by training activity, modeling, and trust. A belief is the most important; students can be better after instructions, training, and practice. So, if the teacher tries to give students more responsibility and authority for learning, an amazing effect may be seen in the classroom.



Reference

Sosin, C. (2013, July). Balanced Literacy in Schaumburg School Dist. 54. Powerpoint presented at the New Taipei City English Teacher Training Program in Rauch Center, Schaumburg, Chicago, America.