Reading Essentials

Teaching Content-Area Literacy Strategies

Contents

Second Language Learners

Reproducibles

Research Notes

Content-Area Literacy Strategies

In order for readers to effectively comprehend content, they must

- be prepared,

- understand the organization of the material, and

- reflect and extend understanding through discussion.

Content-area literacy strategies are divided into before, during, and after reading to address these three conditions. Although strategies are grouped into these three categories, their use is not limited to only before, during, or after reading. Often an effective strategy can be used at two or even three stages of the reading process to make meaning. Whether the strategies are used before, during, or after reading, through their use, students are actively involved in making sense of their reading.

Before-Reading Strategies

The teaching that goes on before actual reading takes place is essential. Before-reading strategies should assist readers in activating prior knowledge, provide them with a purpose for reading, correct misinformation, and stimulate the readers' curiosity. The following prereading strategies will provide the foundation for learning.

As with all strategies, whether before, during, or after reading, modeling teacher thinking first is essential. The teacher can then select which guided practice organizational suggestions—oral, written, and/or graphic—will work best as responsibility is shifted from the teacher to the students as they try out the strategy.

Analogy Chart

Rationale: Learning occurs when new knowledge can be "hooked on" to what is already known. Comparing a familiar or known concept with a new concept that will be explored begins that process and provides students a purpose for reading. Begin with something familiar in the students' lives. Hook the new knowledge on to that which is familiar by making comparisons during reading. This provides a link between what students know and what they are going to learn.

Procedure: Think about something that is common knowledge for students and related to the new concept. Use that concept to build a bridge to the new concept.

Create a two-column analogy chart with one column for the known information and the other column for the new material. Before reading, record known information in the left-hand column. During reading, encourage students to find corresponding, analogous information to complete the right-hand column. Using an analogy chart is a powerful way to help students understand and remember new information.

Second Language Learners

The terms English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and English Language Learners (ELL) were developed to recognize students whose heritage language is other than English. Classrooms today are comprised of a rich variety of heritages and languages reflecting the diverse cultural nature of our society. The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students enter the classroom at various limited English language levels. They are faced with challenging content in an unfamiliar language. An appropriate instructional model must be in place for these students. ESOL instruction is designed to meet the needs of LEP students by providing instruction based on their level of English proficiency.

When developing and enriching instruction through ESOL strategies, the educator must be sensitive to the student's first language and cultural background while at the same time encouraging the student to acquire the English language in a nonthreatening and productive learning environment. The student's individual differences and learning styles must also be considered when applying ESOL strategies. All LEP students are entitled to equal educational opportunities that include access to materials, programs, and experiences.

Using *Reading Essentials* with Limited English Students

The *Reading Essentials* program offers LEP students an opportunity to learn grade-level content as they acquire proficiency in the English language. The additional strategies shown below should be used at certain times throughout the lesson to help each student's individual language development and to help him or her progress to a proficient English language level.

Before Reading

Content-area vocabulary is provided on the inside front covers of all *Reading Essentials* titles. While all students benefit from the preteaching of content vocabulary, it is critical for LEP students. They cannot rely on context clues and general background knowledge to the extent their English-language peers can. Introduce the vocabulary in context and use picture cues with vocabulary definitions to ensure understanding.

Below are some specific strategies that will better prepare LEP students to access the core content information in *Reading Essentials*.

- Many of the *Reading Essentials* books include images that are recognizable to English-speaking students but won't be to LEP students. Make sure images and their relationship to the content are clearly explained.

- Use graphic organizers. Build webs around content vocabulary introduced to expand language acquisition and deepen understanding.

- Make the language comprehensible through the use of gestures, visuals, concrete examples, and oral communication.

Research Notes

The *Reading Essentials* program offers essential, standards-based content in visually appealing, reader-friendly student books. Additionally, the research-based, content-area literacy skills and strategies practiced in the activities in the *Teaching and Assessment Resources* for each strand and the content-literacy strategies taught in *Teaching Content-Area Literacy Strategies* will prepare students for a lifetime of enjoyable and meaningful literacy experiences.

Research and experts suggest…	*Reading Essentials* offers
• "The advantage of most literature [as compared with textbooks], especially paperback books, is that the books are lighter, are formatted to be easy on the eyes, and are much shorter." Ahern & Sandmann (2002)	• Standards-based, curricular-aligned, interesting, and visually attractive informational books, 40 or 48 pages in length.
• "The literature also suggests that teaching comprehension in the context of specific academic areas—for example, social studies—can be effective." National Reading Panel (2000) • "Leggitt (1934) was one of the first reading researchers to integrate lessons providing practice in reading and study skills with course content. …Leggitt concluded that students increase their facility with 'working skills' when they practice those skills in conjunction with appropriate subject matter rather than in isolated lessons." Vacca (2002)	• Content-area literacy strategy instruction using standards-based, curricular-aligned, interesting, and visually attractive informational books.
• "If children are to become truly literate, they need opportunities to read and write in response to expository texts." Moss, et al. (1997)	• Relevant reading and writing activities in the *Teaching and Assessment Resource* for every title.
• "Learning with texts is an active process." Vacca & Vacca (1996) • "Recent research indicates, however, that learning and reading are active processes. Readers construct meaning as they read. Effective readers are strategic. They make predictions, organize information, and interact with text. They evaluate the ideas they are reading about in light of what they already know." Barton & Billmeyer (1998)	• Clear and detailed plans for the explicit teaching of active reading strategies and information to support teachers in recognizing the characteristics of proficient, strategic readers.