Who’s Got Your Back?
Research Supporting Reading Comprehension and Instruction

Annotated Works Cited

Compiled by
Wisconsin State Reading Association’s
Middle Level Literacy & High School Literacy Committees

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Rationale

WSRA Middle Level Literacy & High School Literacy Committee conducted a survey of reading comprehension instruction and practice from August to October 2014. This reading comprehension survey addressed issues in both literacy and content classes. It was sent to teachers and administrators throughout Wisconsin’s 12 CESA regions; 400 teachers, reading specialist and administrators responded to 17 questions.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information to identify perceptions and practices relating to reading comprehension and instruction in all disciplines, grades 6-12. Feedback from Wisconsin stakeholders identified trends in comprehension instruction and revealed professional development needs.

Using key information from the survey the two committees located research, presented at WSRA 2015 convention session, as well as compiled this annotated works cited document. The committees continue to study the survey results and develop further professional development opportunities for Wisconsin educators.

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Citing Textual Evidence

**Practice**


Beers and Probst offer “signposts” for readers to what for when performing a close reading. These “signposts” require students to collect evidence from the text to determine what the texts says explicitly and implicitly. Teacher friendly resource.


This text provides performance assessments, learning progressions, student checklists, writing rubrics and exemplars to use during literacy instruction. Student expectations are clearly defined as are next step in moving them forward.


Fisher and Frey provide a purpose for incorporating evidence into classroom activities. This text will help teachers teach students how to read and analyze complex texts, develop annotation and citation skills, and collaborate with peers to refine their ideas before writing.


*Rigorous reading* provides access points on how to teach students to comprehend complex texts. Frey and Fisher share multiple ways to engage students in authentic learning tasks that revolve around the gradual release of responsibility. Students need to “read with a pencil” and use textual evidence when analyzing texts. Teacher friendly resource.


Provides a framework for students to make meaning from a situation. Students focus on claim, evidence, reasoning and eventually, a rebuttal. This framework allows students to analyze the work they are doing at higher levels.

When developing arguments, people need to state a claim, back up the claim with data, and warrants the relationships between the claim and data. If students are to participate in a debate, citing evidence behind their argument is crucial to support a strong claim. This article provides some key steps in teaching students how to collect this evidence and use it to support a claim.


The text dissects the Common Core State Standards and what the standards mean for educators. Chapter three focuses on CCSS Reading Anchor Standard one, read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. Students need to understand what the text states and what the texts infers. By citing textual evidence, students are able to move from literal comprehension to interpretive comprehension.
Inferencing

Note: Due to the complexity of inferencing as part of comprehension, it is difficult to find articles focused specifically on inferencing strategies for secondary students. Existing studies are geared toward younger students, English language learners, or students with disabilities. There is a substantial gap in the research on inferential strategies for regularly performing middle and high school students.


The authors update their classic Questioning the Author (QtA) strategy and offer new perspectives on how to use QtA to improve students’ understanding of complex texts. Teachers prepare for in-class readings by marking stopping points in the text at which they ask open-ended and thought-provoking questions to elicit student discussion.


The article shares literature and strategies to teach inference in grades 5 -8 across content areas. It acknowledges that inference is an important 21st century skill for all students.


Fisher and Frey studied 12 teachers in grades third through eighth, asking how they supported students during close reading, and what they did when students did not understand the text. Despite the age of the students, this article is useful for secondary teachers trying to improve students’ inferencing skills because several of the supports and contingency plans transfer to secondary classrooms. The planned supports include: explicitly encouraging repeated readings, planning for collaborative conversations among student groups, creating text-dependent questions, and requiring ongoing text annotations. The contingency plans include: re-establishing the purpose of the lesson, analyzing questions according to Question-Answer Relationships (QARs), prompting and cueing, modeling one’s own problem-solving process, and using students’ annotations as formative assessments to determine what they missed and to plan for reteaching.

Working with a veteran special education teacher, researchers designed and implemented a strategic approach to teaching inferences to students with severe reading comprehension deficits. The strategic approach was called INFER, an acronym of the five steps.

1. Students “Interact with the passage and questions” by reading the multiple-choice questions and identifying them as one of two categories: factual or think-and-search; then further classifying the think-and-search questions into one of four types: purpose, main idea/summarizing, prediction or clarification.
2. Students “Note what you know” by activating background knowledge on the topic, underlining key words in the questions, and coding questions by category and type.
3. Students “Find the clues” by carefully reading the passage and underlining clues directly related to keywords in the questions, and choosing tentative answers to the questions.
4. Students “Explore more details” by looking for additional clues in the passage.
5. Finally, students “Return to the question” by checking if each question has been marked and answered.

The researchers found strong positive gains on standardized test measures, but acknowledge that the study was limited to ninth grade students with severe disabilities, and should be replicated with other groups of students. They also found that students did not maintain the gains without practice in the inferencing strategy, but responded with continued strong gains after a 45-minute review session, twelve months later. These results indicate that strategic approaches to reading must be practiced consistently for students to successfully continue their use.


The authors highlight the Questioning the Author (QtA) approach to reading as a way to help teachers meet the challenges of close reading under the Common Core standards. QtA may help teachers to write and ask questions that demand higher order thinking from students. They offer advice and tips to teachers on how to use QtA and other approaches to structure classroom discussions and assignments to lead students into deeper understanding of complex texts.


Incredibly useful text for a variety of instructional approaches. Presented here for its clear chart of question frames to help teachers or students write inferential questions about things and people, actions, events and states of being.


The author uses artifacts for observing nontraditional texts that leads into an inference based on the observation. A two column chart is created, left side is for observation and right side lists the inference for the observation. Several rationales are given for this observation/inference chart. Examples are given from an 11th grade US history class.

The authors revise Raphael’s original (1986) Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) approach to categorizing comprehension questions students often encounter while reading in school. In QAR, students learn to analyze questions and answers by two major categories: “in the text” or “in my head.” “In the text” questions are further classified as “right there,” in which the answer is found in one place, or “think and search,” in which the answer must be assembled from several places in the text. “In my head” questions are further classified as “on my own,” in which answers rely on personal connections that do not require further examination of the text, or “author and me,” in which readers must combine their background knowledge with the information presented by the author, including inferences. By considering the types of questions posed, readers learn where answers may be found, and learn when it is appropriate to apply inferencing strategies.


In this analysis of elementary students’ performance on two standardized tests of reading comprehension, the authors ask if students may struggle with specific types of inferencing. They created categories of 6 question types: elaborative inferences, cohesive inferences, knowledge-based inferences, evaluative inferences, literal information, and vocabulary dependent questions. Then they analyzed the performance on both tests of ten students designated as “skilled comprehenders” and ten students designated as “less-skilled comprehenders.” Both groups scored higher on the literal questions and the cohesive inferences than on the other categories. Skilled comprehenders scored well on literal information, cohesive inferences, and elaborative inferences, but less well on knowledge-based inferences. Less-skilled comprehenders scored well on literal and cohesive inference questions, but struggled on elaborative and knowledge-based inferences. The authors’ conclusions suggest that the differences between less-skilled and skilled comprehenders’ performances lie in their use of efficient reading strategies in applying background knowledge to reading, especially in longer text. They suggest that students probably possess the needed background knowledge, but may need teacher support to know when to apply it for understanding.
The second author has a series of studies on the reading comprehension abilities of elementary students with regular or delayed reading abilities. In this study, the authors investigated whether inference-making was more likely to be a cause or a consequence of poor comprehension ability. They examined standardized reading test results of 80 students, ages six to seven, grouped as skilled comprehenders, less-skilled comprehenders, and a control group of same-age average comprehenders. Less-skilled comprehenders made fewer inferences than the skilled and control group, and were less certain about when to use inferencing strategies, such as drawing upon background knowledge. The authors conclude that poor inferential skills cause incomplete comprehension of texts.


In this dissertation, the author examined how the use of K-12 reading interventions, including Question-Answer Relationships, may improve adult learners’ standardized test scores. The quantitative results indicated non-significant results, but with a noteworthy trend toward higher percentage scores in the experimental group. Qualitative results, including interviews with remedial community college teachers, supported the positive influence on test scores by reading interventions. Findings also explored the substantial role of barriers to learning in adult learners’ lives.
Motivation, Engagement, and Choice


This study focuses on the relationships among reading motivation, engagement, and academic achievement in a traditional reading language arts setting, and an intervention reading language arts setting. More than 800 seventh grade students participated in the intervention, which focuses on Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), which focuses on the need for motivation, engagement, and cognitive strategies for reading informational texts. The intervention analyses of this study show that the intervention under CORI was associated with positive changes related to motivation, engagement, and achievement.


Authors surveyed more than 1,700 middle school students from more than 20 diverse schools about what motivates them to read. Follow-up interviews were conducted with more than 30 students where they reported high engagement with reading. Findings indicate that students most appreciate time to read, and the teacher reading aloud based on personal reasons for reading. Students also emphasized that they saw a need for quality and diversity of reading materials.


This study examines eighth grade students’ perception about choice reading and engagement. Engagement, here, focuses on the social, based on findings from more than 70 student interviews and 15 separate categories of outcomes from relational, intellectual, and even moral lives. Students read primarily young adult literature, by choice, and read at a self-paced speed over the course of the school year. The inclusion of the social aspects of engaged reading from this study lead to questions related to things like how engagement may traditionally be defined, requiring students to all read the same text, treating reading as a purely individual, cognitive task, and expecting similar outcomes for all students.

One high school English teacher implements choice reading in his high school (sophomore) English classes. The teacher structured the class with everyone reading a different book over the course of a three-week unit. The teacher conferred with all students 57 students in two classes while they read. Based on Atwell’s reading workshop model, the teacher created mini-lessons on literary concepts and expected students to apply those concepts to their choice books through conversations and journals. Of the 57 students, there were some who were reluctant to begin, but quickly found out that because of the conferences, they could not get away with fake reading, and actually ended up enjoying “re-discovering” reading.
Vocabulary

Practice


The authors focus on web-based software in two different settings, in school and after school with 11th graders and young adults in the New York City area. Their question is: What role does gamification have in adolescents’ vocabulary development and attitude? They surveyed a number of online sites and used several sources for the study. They found students’ written reflection and motivation strong as the weeks proceeded.


Allen connects research in effective vocabulary instruction and practical strategies. Focuses on helping students understand academic vocabulary found in textbooks, tests, articles, and information text.


This column explores how literacy practices similarly enacted across disciplines served as a platform for considering collaborative professional development contexts. Based on research across science and history classrooms, general vocabulary development was present during engagement with texts as a stepping-stone to disciplinary practices and embedded within disciplinary learning.


Ready to use vocabulary strategies and activities to help readers. Practical for all content area teachers.


Demonstrates how content area teachers can help students become aware of, understand and apply word knowledge to grow their vocabularies. Steps for teaching vocabulary and resources for work selection and included.

This is a practical approach to helping students to master academic vocabulary. This manual contains a six-step method of instruction, tailored English Language Learner procedures, and vocabulary activities and games.


This study focused on a target population's weaknesses in language and vocabulary, especially specialized academic vocabulary of text. The first year of the study sixth graders were from seven middle school in a large urban school, the second year randomized the study in 14 middle schools. Effects were observed on researcher-developed measures of academic vocabulary knowledge, morphological skills and reading comprehension of expository text.