



*Changing Classroom Practice*

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# Preparing School Systems to Use Formative Assessment Data and Research-Based Practices: Resources

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## Implementing RTI: Top 10 Expectations for Teachers, Building Administrators, and School Districts

The Response-to-Intervention model is complex and requires buy-in, cooperation, and collaboration among school and district staff at all levels. To ensure successful RTI implementation, teachers, administrators, and school districts must adopt new behaviors and procedures that may differ from current practices. The checklists below list the 'top 10' skills, attitudes, and practices that define the 'RTI-ready' teacher, building administrator, and school district.

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*In the RTI-ready school, teachers demonstrate these top 10 skills, attitudes, and practices:*

1. Routinely use an appropriate range of research-based Tier 1 whole-group and individual instructional and behavior management strategies independently in the classroom to address the needs of all students. \_\_Y \_\_N
2. Are able to describe and document the research-based Tier 1 classroom strategies that they use. \_\_Y \_\_N
3. Are willing to refer a student for more intensive intervention services (e.g., to an RTI Problem-Solving Team at Tier 2) if Tier 1 supports are not effective in meeting the student's needs. \_\_Y \_\_N
4. Collect and review relevant classroom data for any Tier 1 student being considered for more intensive intervention services. Teachers use the data to judge the effectiveness of Tier 1 interventions and to adjust or change them as necessary. \_\_Y \_\_N
5. Supply documentation of Tier 1 interventions attempted (e.g., start and end dates, frequency, group size, length of session) for any student referred to the RTI Problem-Solving Team. \_\_Y \_\_N
6. Participate when needed in the implementation of students' Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention plans, taking care to implement interventions as designed (intervention integrity). \_\_Y \_\_N
7. Are willing to share ideas and expertise on effective student interventions with other teachers. \_\_Y \_\_N
8. Can speak knowledgeably to parents about the school's RTI process. \_\_Y \_\_N
9. Understand that the RTI process provides timely and targeted student assistance in an unbroken continuum of support and is not simply a 'roadblock' to special education services. \_\_Y \_\_N
10. Seek to expand their general understanding of RTI and build their RTI-related classroom skills as part of continuing professional development. \_\_Y \_\_N

***In the RTI-ready school, building administrators demonstrate these top 10 skills, attitudes, and practices:***

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the RTI model and how it can be implemented within the school. \_\_Y \_\_N
2. Attend RTI staff trainings, demonstrating support of RTI through their attendance. \_\_Y \_\_N
3. Find necessary building resources available to support RTI, such as staff development time or funds, purchase of intervention or progress-monitoring materials, etc. \_\_Y \_\_N
4. Provide support (e.g., classroom coverage) to free up educators to attend RTI Problem-Solving Team meetings as needed. \_\_Y \_\_N
5. Hold teachers accountable for implementing Tier I (classroom) interventions and for delivering—when needed-- more intensive student intervention (Tier 2) plans. \_\_Y \_\_N
6. Serve as 'cheerleaders', communicating the mission of RTI to school staff as a powerful means to help struggling learners and supporting RTI in the face of potential staff resistance. \_\_Y \_\_N
7. Provide regular updates to staff (e.g., via faculty meetings) on the building-level implementation of RTI. \_\_Y \_\_N
8. Communicate with parents about the RTI process and how it provides early and focused assistance for struggling learners without requiring a special education referral. \_\_Y \_\_N
9. Encourage teachers and support staff to expand continually their skills and knowledge base relating to RTI (e.g., through annual job performance evaluations). \_\_Y \_\_N
10. Communicate with the district about the school's implementation of RTI and advocates for needed RTI resources unavailable at the building level. \_\_Y \_\_N

***The RTI-ready school district demonstrates these top 10 practices and procedures:***

1. Establishes a district-wide RTI Steering Group to create a multi-year blueprint to implement RTI in all schools. The RTI Steering Group is made up of key district-level leaders who oversee resources or policies important to RTI (e.g., staff development, curriculum, special education), as well as representatives from schools. \_\_Y \_\_N
2. Communicates with school board members, parents, and other community stakeholders about the RTI model, its potential to help struggling learners, and district implementation plans. \_\_Y \_\_N
3. Adopts and strongly supports standard expectations for effective Tier 1 'core instructional' teaching practices across grade levels and content areas. \_\_Y \_\_N
4. Identifies successful RTI implementation and support as a key annual job performance goal for building administrators at elementary, middle, and high schools. \_\_Y \_\_N
5. Maintains an ongoing program of staff development for teachers, support staff, paraprofessionals, and administrators to provide consistent training in the RTI model and technical assistance support (e.g., intervention design and selection, methods of student progress-monitoring, etc.). \_\_Y \_\_N
6. Assesses candidates' RTI knowledge and skills when hiring new teachers and support staff at all grade levels and in all schools. \_\_Y \_\_N
7. Solicits feedback regularly from administration, teachers, support staff, and parents about implementation of the RTI model, including suggestions for improvements and stakeholder concerns. \_\_Y \_\_N
8. Takes into consideration the needs of the district's RTI project when making decisions that impact instruction, student learning, and student behavior (e.g., purchase of new instructional materials, adoption of major staff development initiatives, changes to curriculum). \_\_Y \_\_N
9. Collects and evaluates program-evaluation data on an ongoing basis to evaluate the effectiveness of the district's implementation of the RTI model. Program evaluation data is routinely shared with relevant district administrators—and is also broken out by school to allow principals and other stakeholders to improve RTI performance at the building level. \_\_Y \_\_N
10. Monitors changes in federal and state education department guidelines and regulations regarding RTI—as well as new developments reported in the RTI implementation literature--that may require adjustments to the district RTI project. \_\_Y \_\_N

## Tier I (Classroom) Intervention Planner

Teacher/Team: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Concern #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Concern #2: \_\_\_\_\_

[Optional] Person(s) assisting with intervention planning process: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Intervention Description</b>	<b>Intervention Delivery</b>	<b>Progress-Monitoring Data</b>	<b>Check-Up Date</b>
Describe each intervention that you plan to use to address the student's concern(s).	List key details about delivery of the intervention, such as: (1) where & when the intervention will be used; (2) the adult-to-student ratio; (3) how frequently the intervention will take place; (4) the length of time each session of the intervention will last.	Note what classroom data will be used to demonstrate the student's progress during this intervention.	Select a date when the data will be reviewed to evaluate the intervention.

# Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach

Teachers know how difficult it often is to get students to understand and use a new academic strategy. A number of roadblocks can prevent students from successfully applying strategies. For example, students may initially learn the steps of a strategy incorrectly and become discouraged when they discover that it does not help them with their work. Even if students become proficient in using a strategy, they may fail to recognize those academic situations when the strategy should be applied. (An unused strategy is equal to no strategy at all!) Or students may know full well when they are supposed to use a strategy (e.g., proofreading a homework assignment) but simply be unmotivated to do so.

Fortunately, you can follow a direct-instruction sequence to increase the probability that your students will both correctly master and actually use effective academic strategies. This framework includes four major stages: (1) you explicitly show students how to use the skill or strategy, (2) students practice the skill under your supervision--and you give frequent corrective feedback and praise, (3) students use the skill independently in real academic situations, and (4) students use the skill in a variety of other settings or situations (“generalization”). To avoid overloading your students with more new information than they can absorb, teach only one strategy at a time and make sure that your students have thoroughly mastered each strategy before teaching them another.

1. **“Show them!”: The teacher demonstrates to students how to use the skill.** The goal in this introductory step is to demonstrate the strategy so clearly that students will have a firm understanding and foundation for their later mastery of the skill. In most cases, you should devote at least a full session to demonstrating the strategy. (More complex strategies may require additional time.) During the lesson, students should be actively engaged and responding, rather than passively listening. If possible, make the session fast-paced, interactive, and fun!

*Introduce the skill.* To build a rationale for using the skill, discuss the problem or difficulty that it can resolve.

- You might, for example, introduce the use of *keywords* (a strategy for memorizing factual information) by holding up a classroom science text and saying, “You will need to remember hundreds of important facts from your science reading. Today we are going to learn a strategy that can help you to do this.”

- You can also stimulate student interest and motivation and activate the class’s prior knowledge of the topic by having the group briefly share their own favorite techniques for accomplishing the same academic goal (e.g., “What are some of your favorite ways to memorize lots of facts?”).

*Describe & demonstrate the skill.* Present the main steps of the strategy in simple terms. List the same main steps on a wall poster or in a handout so that students can refer back to them as needed. Use overhead transparencies or other visual aids to display examples of text, academic worksheets, or other materials that you will use to demonstrate the strategy. Consider handing out student copies of the same materials so that your class can work along with you. Take students through several demonstrations in which you walk through the steps of the strategy. Use a “think-aloud” procedure to share your reasoning with students as you apply the strategy. Start with simple examples that most students should be able to understand without difficulty. Introduce increasingly complex examples until you are demonstrating the strategy using grade-appropriate content.

*Elicit student participation.* Run through several more demonstrations of the strategy, inviting student volunteers to come to the front of the room to walk the class through the strategy. Or call on different students to share how they would apply each step. Give gentle, corrective feedback as needed. Praise students frequently and give them specific positive feedback whenever they correctly use a step in the strategy.

*Assess student understanding.* The class is ready to move to the next stage of instruction when most students appear to have a general understanding of the steps in the strategy, and guidelines for when to use it. You should be able to tell through the quality of student responses whether the class grasps the strategy.

2. **“Watch them & praise them!”: Students practice the skill under teacher supervision.** At this stage, students have begun to acquire the strategy but need opportunities to practice it under teacher supervision. Teacher oversight and feedback is especially important to prevent students new to the skill from practicing it incorrectly.

Start by giving students simple examples. As students become more skilled in using the strategy, give them more advanced academic materials, until the examples are equal to grade-level work.

For this stage, you may want to pair students and have them alternate roles: one student applies the strategy to an example, while the other acts as the observer who checks the posted strategy steps to be sure that all steps were correctly followed. As students work, you can walk around the room to monitor the dialog, and provide feedback, praise, and assistance as needed. Alternatively, you may want to have students work independently and then ‘report out’ on their strategies to the larger group.

Many students, particularly those who need more practice and support to learn a new skill, do best at this stage if they are encouraged initially to “think aloud” as they move through the strategy—i.e., stating each step of the skill as they implement it and giving reasons for the decisions that they make. As students show that they can use the strategy dependably, you can ‘fade’ students’ use of “think aloud”. First, demonstrate to them how lower their tone of voice during “think-aloud” until students are whispering softly the steps of the strategy. Then model to students how to mouth the steps silently or simply to *think* through the steps without actually stating them.

While most of your students are likely to progress at a similar rate, you will probably find that several students are advanced in their understanding of the skill and others lag behind. You may want to assign advanced students as peer “strategy” coaches to work with their classmates. Students who struggle in acquiring the strategy may require scaffolding support (individual modifications to help them to master the concepts or tasks), such as additional teacher feedback and praise, simplified practice materials, or more opportunities to try out the skill.

*Assess student acquisition.* Your class is ready to advance to the next stage when the majority appears to understand and to be able to use the strategy reliably—at least with simple materials.

3. **“Make them use it!”: Students employ the skill independently in real academic situations.** After learning a strategy and practicing it under your supervision, students are now ready to use it to complete classwork and homework assignments.

Again, you should start off with students applying the strategy to simpler assignments. Gradually increase the length and complexity of assignments as students become more confident and skilled with the strategy. Be prepared at the start of this stage to monitor students’ follow-through and care in using the strategy. Give ongoing feedback and encouragement as needed.

4. **“Expand their horizons!”: Students use the strategy in all appropriate settings or situations.** The ideal outcome of strategy training is that the student *generalizes* the training (e.g., is able and willing to use the strategy in any academic situation in which it would benefit him or her). Although it is every teacher’s fervent wish that students generalize good academic strategies, most children need direct training and reinforcement to help them to apply a skill across settings (e.g., at school and at home) or in different activities. Here are some ideas to assist students to generalize skills:

- When you first train students to use the strategy, give them varied materials. If you are training them to use a reading strategy, for example, you might use excerpts from an encyclopedia, a news magazine, and a history textbook.

- Use a clear, simple verbal prompt or other reminder whenever you want students to employ a specific strategy.
- Let other teachers know that you have taught your students a specific strategy. Share copies of the strategy steps with these instructors and urge them to require students to apply the strategy in their classrooms.
- Send a note home to parents outlining the steps of the strategy that their child has been taught. If appropriate, encourage parents to help the child to use the strategy on a homework assignment.
- Enlist students who are proficient in using the strategy to serve as peer tutors, available to train other students (or even adults!) to use the skill.
- Have students share creative ideas for extending, improving, or enhancing the strategy. Type up these ideas to share with other students and instructors.

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## Research-Based Elements of Effective Interventions

Teachers can have confidence in any classroom intervention by checking to see that it contains these key evidence-based elements:

- **'Correctly targeted'**: The intervention is appropriately matched to the student's academic or behavioral needs.
- **'Explicit instruction'**: Student skills have been broken down "into manageable and deliberately sequenced steps and providing overt strategies for students to learn and practice new skills" p.1153
- **'Appropriate level of challenge'**: The student experiences adequate success with the instructional task.
- **'High opportunity to respond'**: The student actively responds at a rate frequent enough to promote effective learning.
- **'Feedback'**: The student receives prompt performance feedback about the work completed.

Source: Burns, M. K., VanDerHeyden, A. M., & Boice, C. H. (2008). Best practices in intensive academic interventions. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp.1151-1162). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

# Content-Area Vocabulary Instruction: Selected Intervention Ideas & Graphic Displays

## Classroom Literacy Strategies: Academic & Content-Area Vocabulary

### *Why This Instructional Goal is Important*

The explicit teaching of instructional vocabulary is a central literacy-building goal in secondary classrooms. As vocabulary terms become more specialized in content area courses, students are less able to derive the meaning of unfamiliar words incidentally simply by relying on the context in which they appear. Students must instead learn vocabulary through more direct means, including having opportunities to explicitly memorize words and their definitions. On average, students expand their reading vocabularies by 2000 to 3000 new words per year (Texas Reading Initiative, 2002).

While the typical student can master a new word after about 12 meaningful exposures to the term; some students may require as many as 17 exposures to learn a word. (Kamil, et al., 2008). In secondary courses with a substantial number of specialized terms, time should be set aside each period to explicitly teach and review vocabulary.

There are two general approaches to vocabulary instruction: 'additive' and 'generative' (Kamil et al., 2008). Additive strategies are the range of techniques used to teach specific words. For example, having students create flashcards to review vocabulary with the term on one side and its definition on the other would be one additive strategy. Generative strategies are those that teach students how to derive the meaning of words independently. Teaching students to identify word roots and affixes is one generative approach to vocabulary instruction.

### *Strategies to Promote This Instructional Goal*

**Provide Dictionary Training.** The student is trained to use an Internet lookup strategy to better understand dictionary or glossary definitions of key vocabulary items. The student first looks up the word and its meaning(s) in the dictionary/glossary. If necessary, the student isolates the specific word meaning that appears to be the appropriate match for the term as it appears in course texts and discussion. The student goes to an Internet search engine (e.g., Google) and locates at least five text samples in which the term is used in context and appears to match the selected dictionary definition. Optional: Have students meet in pairs or cooperative groups to review their written definitions and context examples of target vocabulary

**Enhance Vocabulary Instruction Through Use of Graphic Organizers or Displays: A Sampling.** Teachers can use graphic displays to structure their vocabulary discussions and activities (Boardman et al., 2008; Fisher, 2007; Texas Reading Initiative, 2002). Four graphic display formats are described briefly below—and examples of each appear in the next few pages of this handout:

- *4-Square Word Activity.* The student divides a page into four quadrants. In the upper left section, the student writes the target word. In the lower left section, the student writes the word definition. In the upper right section, the student generates a list of examples that illustrate the term, and in the lower right section, the student writes 'non-examples' (e.g., terms that are the opposite of the target vocabulary word):

- *Semantic/Word Definition Map.* The graphic display contains sections in which the student writes the word, its definition ('what is this?'), additional details that extend its meaning ('What is it like?'), as well as a listing of examples and 'non-examples' (e.g., terms that are the opposite of the target vocabulary word).
- *Semantic Feature Analysis.* A target vocabulary term is selected for analysis in this grid-like graphic display. Possible features or properties of the term appear along the top margin, while examples of the term are listed on the left margin. The student considers the vocabulary term and its definition. Then the student evaluates each example of the term to determine whether it does or does not match each possible term property or element.
- *Comparison/Contrast (Venn) Diagram.* Two terms are listed and defined. For each term, the student brainstorms qualities or properties or examples that illustrate the term's meaning. Then the student groups those qualities, properties, and examples into 3 sections: A. items unique to Term 1; B. items unique to Term 2; and C. items shared by both terms.

**Promote 'Wide Reading'** (Fisher, 2007). Students are encouraged to read widely in the content area, using texts that supplement and extend information supplied by the textbook. 'Wide reading' results in substantial increases in student vocabulary over time due to incidental learning. The effects of wide reading accumulate over time and result in increases in general academic vocabulary as well as vocabulary in specific content areas. Wide reading should be encouraged at the earliest possible grades, so that students can benefit from their expanded vocabulary knowledge 'downstream' (in later, higher grade levels). To strengthen the positive impact of wide reading on vocabulary development, have student texts available that vary in difficulty and that are of high interest. Discuss readings in class. Experiment with ways to document student independent reading and integrate that 'wide reading' into an effort grade for the course. If needed, build time into the student's school schedule for supervised 'wide reading' time.

**Hold 'Read-Alouds'** (Fisher, 2008). Select texts that supplement the course textbook and that illustrate central concepts and contain important vocabulary covered in the course. Read those texts aloud for 3 to 5 minutes per class session--while students follow along silently. Read-alouds provide students with additional exposure to vocabulary items in context. They can also lower the threshold of difficulty: Students may be more likely to attempt to read an assigned text independently if they have already gotten a start in the text by listening to a more advanced reader read the first few pages aloud. Read-alouds can support other vocabulary-building activities such as guided discussion, vocabulary review, and wide reading. Teachers are cautioned not to simply read the textbook aloud when using this strategy, however, as students will probably find that activity to be uninteresting.

**Provide Regular In-Class Instruction and Review of Vocabulary Terms, Definitions** (Texas Reading Initiative, 2002). Present important new vocabulary terms in class, along with student-friendly definitions. Provide 'example sentences' to illustrate the use of the term. Assign students to write example sentences employing new vocabulary to illustrate their mastery of the terms.

**Generate 'Possible Sentences'** (Texas Reading Initiative, 2002). The teacher selects vocabulary that applies to the day's text selection, including 6 to 8 challenging new vocabulary terms and 4 to 6 easier, more familiar vocabulary items. Introduce the vocabulary terms to the class. Provide definitions of the words (or better yet elicit those definitions from students if possible). Direct students individually, in pairs, or in small groups to write sentences that contain at least two words from the posted vocabulary list. In large group, have students share their composed sentences and write these examples on the board. Do not evaluate sentences as being 'correct' or 'incorrect' during this stage.

Next, direct students to read the text selection. After students have completed their reading, review the 'possible sentences' that were previously generated. For each sentence, evaluate as a group whether, based on the passage just read, the sentence is 'possible' (true) in its current form. If needed, have the group recommend how to change the sentence to make it 'possible'.

### *Troubleshooting Tips*

**Students Lack Basic Academic Vocabulary.** Some students may have deficits in their grasp of more general academic terms, such as *discourse* or *hypothesis*. The school may want to develop a list of the most crucial of these more general academic terms and make this shared list available to all teachers to better allow those instructors to regularly use and model this more general academic vocabulary. As a starting point, teachers can view a comprehensive list of academic words and the frequency with which they are used in English at: <http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/>

### *Building Capacity*

**Develop Content-Area Vocabulary Lists for Each Course.** Whether working alone or with their instructional departments, secondary teachers should develop a list of the most important vocabulary items that students should master in each content-area course. When teachers have identified essential vocabulary in advance, they can more easily integrate vocabulary instruction into their lessons.

**Measure Student Acquisition of Target Vocabulary.** Teachers can informally track student vocabulary acquisition by listening to student use of vocabulary during guided discussions and monitoring vocabulary terms that appear in student journal entries.

More formally, teachers can track student acquisition of specialized vocabulary by using brief, timed vocabulary matching probes (Espin, Shin, & Busch, 2005). The student is given a worksheet with vocabulary items appearing on the left side of the page. Definitions that correspond to each of the terms appear on the right side of the page, in scrambled order. The student matches terms to their correct definitions.

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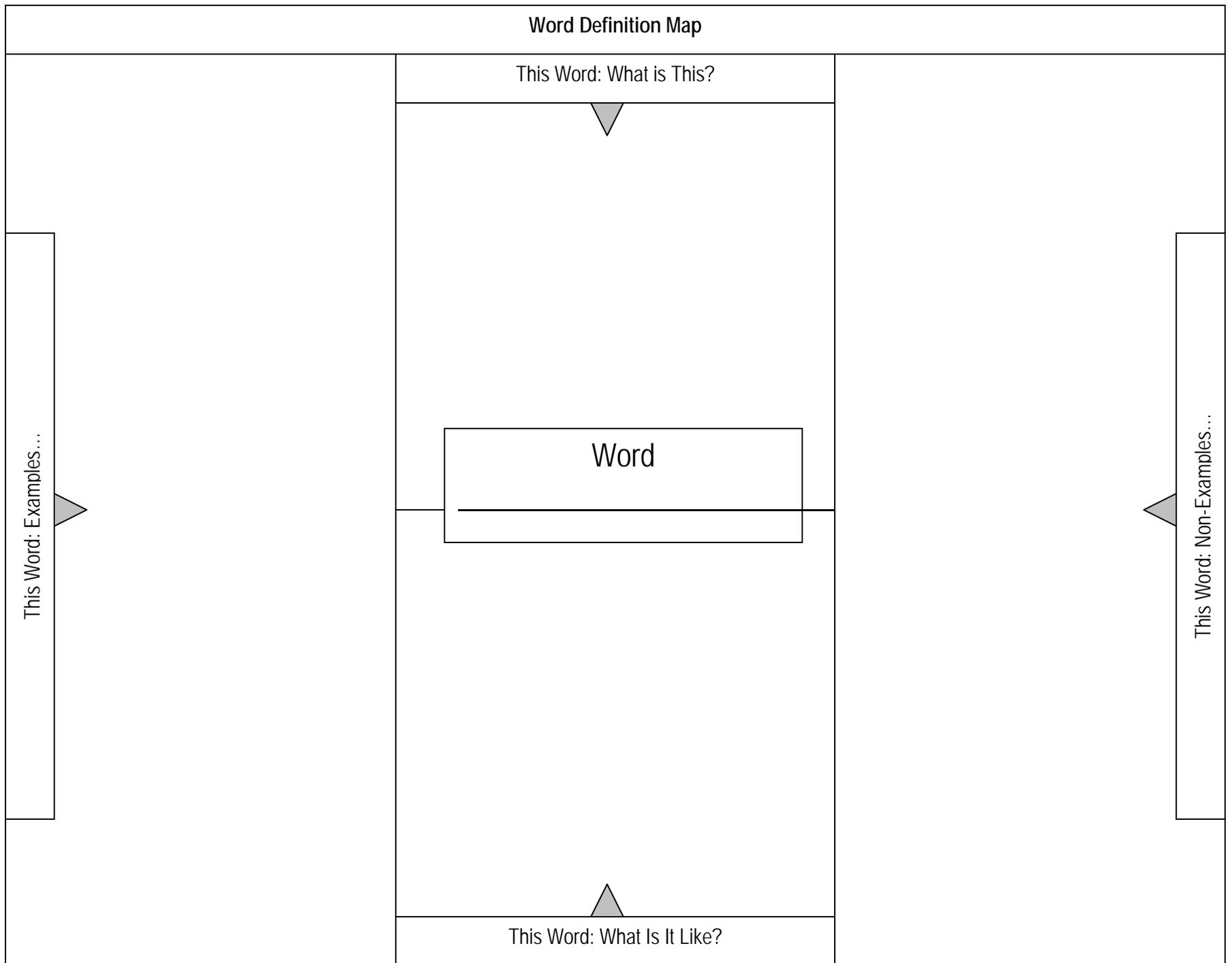
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This Word	Examples of This Word
4-Square Word Activity	
Definition of This Word	Non-Examples of This Word

Adapted from: Texas Reading Initiative. (2002). *Promoting vocabulary development: Components of effective vocabulary instruction*. Austin, TX: Author. Retrieved November 15, 2008, from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/reading/practices/redbk5.pdf>



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# Semantic Feature Analysis for This Concept: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible Features of This Concept

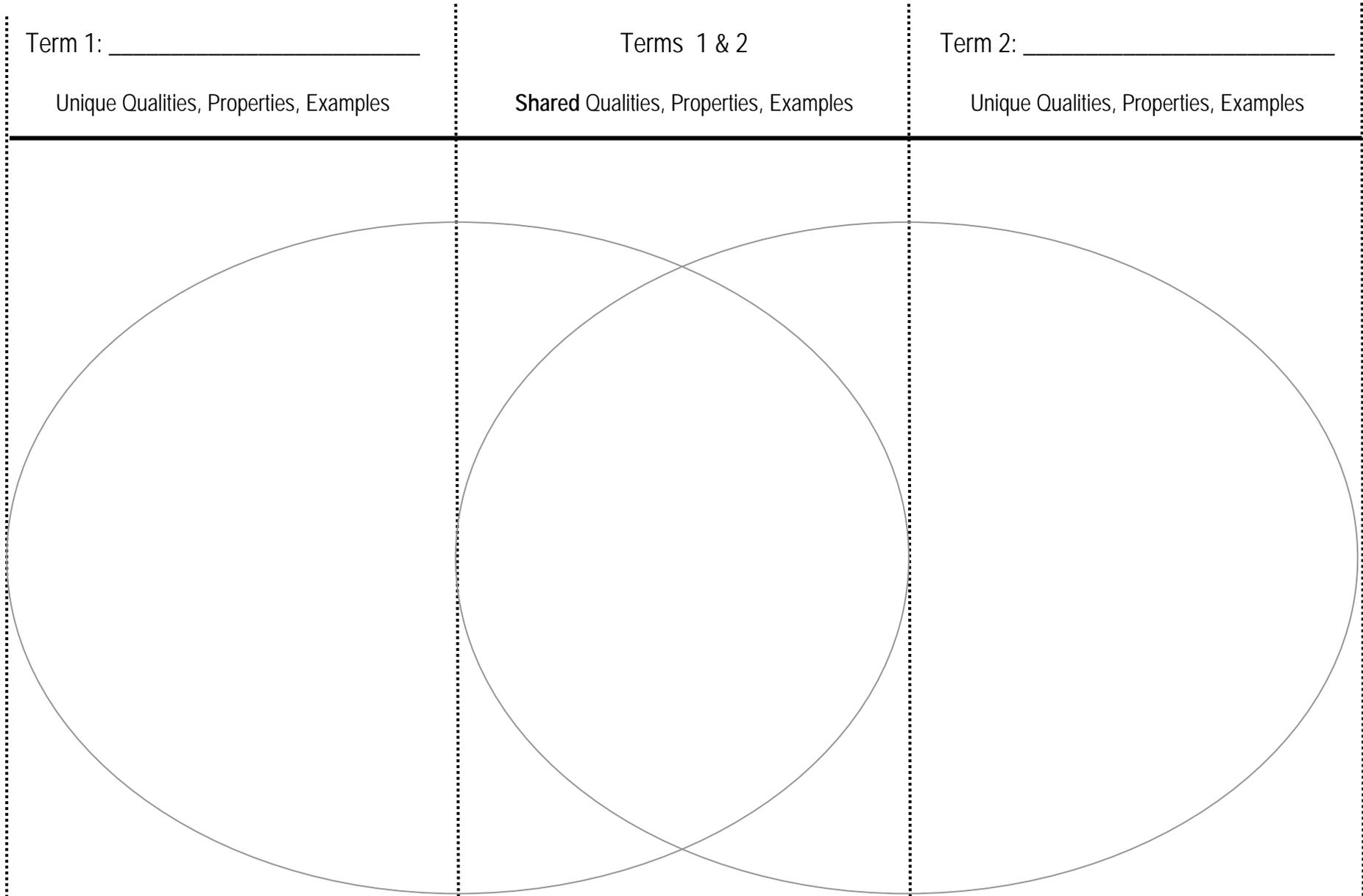


Adapted from: Fisher, D. (2007). Creating a schoolwide vocabulary initiative in an urban high school. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 12, 337-351.

Term 1 & Definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Term 2 & Definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Comparison/Contrast/Venn Diagram Display



# Reading Comprehension: Selected Intervention Scripts & Resources

## Classroom Literacy Strategies: Reading Comprehension

### *Why This Instructional Goal is Important*

Teachers have a wide degree of latitude in selecting reading comprehension strategies to use in their classrooms. At present, there is no clear evidence that any one instructional technique to promote reading comprehension is clearly superior to others. In fact, it appears that students benefit from being taught **any** self-directed practice that prompts them to engage more actively in understanding the meaning of text (Kamil et al., 2008). Reading comprehension interventions vary: Some (e.g., Oral Retell) are whole-group or cooperative learning strategies that promote a better understanding of specific reading assignments, while others (e.g., Question Generation) are designed to teach specific reading comprehension skills such as the ability to formulate a main idea sentence to capture essential ideas from an informational passage.

### *Strategies to Promote This Instructional Goal*

**Assist Students to Set 'Content Goals' for Reading** (Boardman et al., 2008). Students are more likely to be motivated to read--and to read more closely—if they have specific content-related reading goals in mind. At the start of a reading assignment, for example, the instructor has students state what questions they might seek to answer or what topics they would like to learn more about in their reading. The student or teacher writes down these questions. After students have completed the assigned reading, they review their original questions and share what they have learned (e.g., through discussion in large group or cooperative learning group, or even as a written assignment).

**Teach Students to Monitor Their Own Comprehension and Apply 'Fix-Up' Skills** (Boardman et al., 2008). Teachers can teach students specific strategies to monitor their understanding of text and independently use 'fix-up' skills as needed. Examples of student monitoring and repair skills for reading comprehension include encouraging them to:

- Stop after every paragraph to summarize its main idea
- Reread the sentence or paragraph again if necessary
- Generate and write down questions that arise during reading
- Restate challenging or confusing ideas or concepts from the text in the student's own words

### **Collect a Bank of 'Intervention Scripts' to Teach Specific Comprehension Strategies.**

Teachers can collect 'intervention scripts' to address different comprehension issues that arise in their classrooms. A sampling of 7 intervention scripts for reading comprehension appears in the next few pages.

### *Troubleshooting Tips*

**Content-area Teachers Are Intimidated by the Request to Teach 'Reading Comprehension'.** A busy teacher may feel overwhelmed at the thought of having to teach so global a skill as 'reading comprehension' to struggling students. Instead, the school can acknowledge that classroom teachers are 'content experts' and encourage them to generate ideas for helping students to better those comprehend specialized course texts and readings in which the teacher is highly knowledgeable.

### *Building Capacity*

**Allow Instructional Departments to Develop Their Own Set of Comprehension Ideas.** Each academic subject presents unique reading comprehension challenges. For example, social studies

often requires that students be able to read and understand historical documents from different time periods, while advanced math courses expect that students can comprehend and solve word problems with advanced math graphics. Build in regular opportunities for teachers within the various instructional departments to communicate with each other about reading comprehension strategies that work best within their discipline.

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# Be a Careful Reader!: Four Strategies to Better Understand What You Are Reading

When you are reading an article, book chapter, or story, you can use these four simple techniques to be sure that you fully understand the content.

**Making Predictions.** Before you begin to read the selection, look at the main title, scan the pages to read the major headings, and look at any illustrations. Based on these clues, try to predict what the article or story is about.

Now read the selection to see whether it turns out as you predicted! Stop at several points during your reading and ask yourself how closely the content of the actual story or article fit your initial prediction. How do the facts and information that you have read change your prediction about what you will find in the rest of the story or article?

**Listing Main ideas.** Stop after each paragraph or major section of the passage. Construct one or two complete sentences that sum up only the most important idea(s) that appear in the section. (Good summary sentences include key concepts or events but leave out less important details!) Write these summary (main idea) sentences down and continue reading.

**Generating Questions.** Look at the ideas that you have summarized as you read the passage. For each main idea listed, write down at least one question that the main idea will answer. Good questions should include words like “who”, “where”, “when”, “why”, and “what”.

For example, if you are reading an article about the extinction of the dinosaurs, you might list the following main idea: “Most scientists now believe that the extinction of the dinosaurs was caused by a large meteor striking the earth.” You could then write this question: “What event do most scientists now believe caused the mass extinction of the dinosaurs?”

**Clarifying Understanding.** Sometimes in your reading you will run into words, phrases, or whole sentences that really don't make sense. Here are some ways that you can clarify the meaning of your reading before moving on:

*Unknown words.* If you come across a word whose meaning you do not know, read the sentences before and after it to see if they give you clues to the word's meaning. If the word is still unclear, look it up in a dictionary.

*Unclear phrases or sentences.* Reread the phrase or sentence carefully and try to understand it. If it contains words such as “them”, “it” or “they”, be sure that you know what nouns (persons, places, or things) to which these words refer. If all else fails, ask another student or an adult to help you to clarify the meaning of a confusing word, phrase, or sentence.

## References

Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. (2008). Effective instruction for adolescent struggling readers: A practice brief. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

# Student Reading Comprehension Strategies Worksheet (Adapted from Lysynchuk, Pressley, & Vye, 1990)

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Reading Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Prediction.** Before you begin to read the selection, look at the main title, scan the pages to read the major headings, and look at any illustrations. Write down your *prediction about* what the story or article will cover:

\_\_\_\_\_

**List Main Ideas.** As you finish reading each *paragraph* or *key section* of the passage, summarize the main idea of that paragraph or section in one or two complete sentences. (Use the back of this sheet if needed.):

• *Main idea 1:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• *Main idea 2:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• *Main idea 3:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Generate Questions.** For each main idea listed, write down at least one *question* that the main idea will answer. Good questions should include words like “who”, “where”, “when”, “why”, and “what”.

• *Question 1 :* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• *Question 2 :* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• *Question 3 :* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Clarifying.** Copy down any words, phrases, or sentences in the passage that are unclear: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Excerpts from: The Savvy Teacher's Guide: Reading Interventions That Work

*Jim Wright*  
*[www.interventioncentral.org](http://www.interventioncentral.org)*



## *Reading Fluency: Repeated Reading*

**Description:** The student reads through a passage repeatedly, silently or aloud, and receives help with reading errors.

**Materials:**

- Reading book
- Stop watch (if readings are to be timed)

**Preparation:**

- The teacher, parent, adult tutor, or peer tutor working with the student should be trained in advance to use the listening passage preview approach.

**Intervention Script:**

1. Sit with the student in a quiet location without too many distractions. Position the book selected for the reading session so that both you and the student can easily follow the text.
2. Select a passage in the book of about 100 to 200 words in length.
3. Have the student read the passage through. (Unless you have a preference, the student should be offered the choice of reading the passage aloud or silently.)
4. If the student is reading aloud and misreads a word or hesitates for longer than 5 seconds, read the word aloud and have the student repeat the word correctly before continuing through the passage. If the student asks for help with any word, read the word aloud. If the student requests a word definition, give the definition.
5. When the student has completed the passage, have him or her read the passage again. You can choose to have the student read the passage repeatedly until *either* the student has read the passage a total of 4 times (Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985) *or* the student reads the passage at the rate of at least 85 to 100 words per minute (Dowhower, 1987; Herman, 1985).

**Tips:**

**Take Steps to Keep the Student Invested in the Activity.** Repeated reading is effective as an intervention to build student reading fluency because it gives the student lots of reading practice. However, this activity *could* become dull and uninteresting for the student over time. If you find that the student is beginning to lose interest in repeated reading, consider:

- Provide praise to the student in specific terms for good reading.
- Allow the student to pick out high-interest books or articles to use for repeated reading.

- Using a stop-watch, monitor the student's reading rate during each repeated reading and chart the results on a graph.

**References:**

Dowhower, S.L. (1987). Effects of repeated reading on second-grade transitional readers' fluency and comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 22, 389-406.

Herman, P.A. (1985). The effects of repeated readings on reading rate, speech pauses, and word recognition accuracy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20, 553-565.

Rashotte, C.A. & Torgesen, J.K. (1985). Repeated reading and reading fluency in learning disabled children. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20, 180-188.

Rasinski, T.V. (1990). Effects of repeated reading and listening-while-reading on reading fluency. *Journal of Educational Research*, 83(3), 147-150.

# *Reading Comprehension: Advanced Story Map Instruction*

**Description:** Students are taught to use a basic ‘Story Grammar’ to map out, identify and analyze significant components of narrative text (e.g., fiction, biographies, historical accounts).

Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy. (For effective-teaching tips, consult the guidelines presented in “*Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach*”).

## **Materials:**

- Overhead transparencies of short stories or other narrative texts, transparency markers
- Student copies of *Advanced Story Map Worksheet*, and practice narrative passages (optional) or reading/text books

## **Preparation:**

- Prepare overheads of sample narrative passages.

## **Intervention Script:**

1. Introduce the concept of a Story Grammar to students and preview main elements. (Refer to the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* as a guide.) Tell students that a Story Grammar can help them to better understand a story’s characters and events.
2. Set aside at least four successive instructional days to introduce the major components of the Story Grammar: (A) Identifying important characters and their personalities and motivation, (B) Identifying main problem and significant plot developments, (C) Noting characters’ attempts to solve problems, and (D) Identifying a narrative’s overarching theme.

**Interactive Instruction:** Make the instruction of each story component highly interactive, with clear teacher demonstration and use of examples. ‘Think aloud’ as you read through a story with the class to illustrate to students how you arrive at your conclusions. Elicit student discussion about the story. As you fill out sections of the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* on the overhead, have students write responses on their own copies of the worksheet.

3. **Error Correction:** When students commit errors, direct them to the appropriate section of the narrative to reread it for the correct answer. Use guiding questions and modeling as necessary to help students to come up with an appropriate response.

4. After students have been introduced to the key Story Grammar elements, the group is now ready to use the Grammar to analyze a sample narrative passage. Have students read independently through a story. Pause at pre-determined points to ask the group key questions (e.g., “Who is the main character? What is she like?”). After discussion, encourage students to write their answers on the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* while you fill out the same worksheet as an overhead. Give specific praise to students for appropriately identifying Story Grammar elements.
5. When students are able to use the Story Grammar independently, have them read through selected stories and complete the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* on their own. Check students’ responses and conference individually with those students requiring additional guidance and support.

**Tips:**

**Edit student creative writing using the Story Map Worksheet.** Students can use the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* to check the structure of stories that they have written. Peer editors can also use the worksheet to give feedback to students about the clarity of their story structure.

**Consider the Story Grammar as a tool for analyzing historical narratives .** Many historical accounts are structured as dramatic narratives—with central characters taking part in key events. Students can productively use elements of a Story Grammar to analyze these historical narratives.

**Troubleshooting:**

**Students do not seem motivated to use the Story Grammar framework.** To make a Story Grammar analysis more inviting, consider screening a video of a popular movie or television program. At key points, stop the tape, have students complete relevant sections of the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet*, and discuss the results. This exercise can be highly motivating and also makes clear to students that a Story Grammar is a universal tool that help us understand narratives presented in any medium.

**Some students do not appear to be successful in using the Story Grammar independently.** Pull aside individuals or small groups of students who might be having similar problems mastering the Story Grammar. As you read together through a story, have students “think aloud” the strategies that they follow to identify Story Grammar elements. If you discover that a student is using a faulty approach (e.g., rotely selecting the first character named in the story as the main character) you can gently correct the student by modeling and demonstrating more appropriate strategies.

**References:**

Gardill, M.C. & Jitendra, A.K. (1999). Advanced story map instruction: Effects on the reading comprehension of students with learning disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education*, 28, 2-17.

# Advanced Story Map Worksheet (Adapted from Gardill & Jitendra, 1999)

-----  
Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Story Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
-----

1. Who is the central character? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the main character like? (Describe his/her key qualities or personality traits).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who is another important character in the story? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is this other important character like? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where and when does the story take place? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the major problem that the main character is faced with? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How does the main character attempt to solve this major problem? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What is the twist, surprise, or unexpected development that takes place in the story?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How is the problem solved or not solved?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What is the theme or lesson of the story?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# *Reading Comprehension: “Click or Clunk?” A Student Comprehension Self-Check*

**Description:** Students periodically check their understanding of sentences, paragraphs, and pages of text as they read. When students encounter problems with vocabulary or comprehension, they use a checklist to apply simple strategies to solve those reading difficulties.

Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy. (For effective-teaching tips, consult the guidelines presented in *“Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach”*).

## **Materials:**

- Overhead transparencies of practice reading passages and *“My Reading Check Sheet”*, transparency markers
- Student copies of practice reading passages (optional) or reading/text books, *“My Reading Check Sheet”*

## **Preparation:**

- Prepare overheads of sample passages.

## **Intervention Script:**

1. Tell students that they will be learning ways to read more carefully. Hand out student copies of *“My Reading Check Sheet”*.

Review all of the reading strategies on the student handout.

Instruct students that, during any reading assignment, when they come to:

- the end of each sentence, they should ask the question, *“Did I understand this sentence?”* If students understand the sentence, they say *“Click!”* and continue reading. If they do not understand, they say *“Clunk!”* and refer to the strategy sheet *“My Reading Check Sheet”* to correct the problem.
- the end of each paragraph, they should ask the question, *“What did the paragraph say?”* If they do not know the main idea(s) of the paragraph, students refer to the strategy sheet *“My Reading Check Sheet”* to correct the problem.
- the end of each page, they should ask the question, *“What do I remember?”* If they do not remember sufficient information, students refer to the strategy sheet *“My Reading Check Sheet”* to correct the problem.

Read through a sample passage with the class. At the end of each sentence, paragraph, and page, “think aloud” as you model use of the comprehension checks. (As you read each sentence, be sure to call out “Click!” when you and the class understand a sentence and “Clunk!” when you do not.)

2. When students have learned to use the “Click or Clunk?” strategy, have them use it in independent reading assignments.

**Tips:**

**Create Silent “Click/Clunk” Signals.** Although it may seem rather silly to have students call out “Click” and “Clunk” as an aid to monitor their own reading, the technique is actually quite valuable. When students must make regular summary judgments about how well they comprehend at the sentence level, they are more likely to recognize—and to resolve—comprehension errors as these mistakes arise.

You might find, however, that students start to distract each other as they call out these comprehension signals. Once you see that students consistently use the technique, you can train them to softly whisper the signal. Or confer with your students to come up with an unobtrusive non-verbal signal (e.g., lightly tapping the desk once for “Click” and twice for “Clunk”) that is obvious enough to allow you to monitor readers’ use of the technique without distracting other students.

**References:**

Anderson, T. (1980). Study strategies and adjunct aids. In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce, & W. F. Brewer (Eds.) *Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Babbs, P. J. (1984). Monitoring cards help improve comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 38(2), 200-204.

# MY READING CHECK SHEET\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_



## *Sentence Check... "Did I understand this sentence?"*

*If you had trouble understanding a word in the sentence, try...*

- Reading the sentence over.
- Reading the next sentence.
- Looking up the word in the glossary (if the book or article has one).
- Asking someone.

*If you had trouble understanding the meaning of the sentence, try...*

- Reading the sentence over.
- Reading the whole paragraph again.
- Reading on.
- Asking someone.



## *Paragraph Check... "What did the paragraph say?"*

*If you had trouble understanding what the paragraph said, try...*

- Reading the paragraph over.



## *Page Check... "What do I remember?"*

*If you had trouble remembering what was said on this page, try...*

- Re-reading each paragraph on the page, and asking yourself, "What did it say?"

\*Adapted from Anderson (1980), Babbs (1984)

## *Reading Comprehension: Main-Idea Maps*

**Description:** This simple strategy teaches students to generate a graphic organizer containing the main ideas of an expository passage.

Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy. (For effective-teaching tips, consult the guidelines presented in “*Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach*”).

### **Materials:**

- Overhead transparencies of practice expository passages, transparency markers
- Student copies of practice expository passages (optional) or reading/text books, *Main Idea Graphic Organizer*

### **Preparation:**

- Prepare overheads of sample passages.

### **Intervention Script:**

1. Introduce the strategy by telling students that we can draw pictures, or Main Idea Maps, that help us to understand how the ideas of a multi-paragraph passage fit together. Present these three steps for mapping out the main ideas of an expository:

**Locating the Main Ideas of Paragraphs.** Read through a short (2-6 paragraph) practice expository passage with students.

On a blank overhead transparency or chart paper, begin building a graphic organizer by writing the title of the passage in the center. Draw a box around the title. (If the passage has no title, query the class and make up a suitable title based on their suggestions.) NOTE: Instead of drawing your own map, you can use the pre-formatted *Main Idea Graphic Organizer* that is included with this strategy.

Tell students that some paragraphs have summary sentences that state the main idea or “gist” of the paragraph or passage. Other paragraphs have *implied* main ideas, which the reader must figure out, based on key facts or ideas that they contain.

Go through each paragraph in the practice passage and identify the paragraph’s main idea. Demonstrate how to summarize that main idea as a single, succinct phrase.

**Building the Main Idea Graphic Organizer.** As you summarize each paragraph’s main idea, write the number of the paragraph and main-idea summary phrase on the graphic organizer. (Start writing at the upper left corner of the organizer sheet and continue clockwise around the page. Space the summary phrases to allow space to write under each. See the sample “Main Idea Graphic Organizer.”).

**Adding Key Facts.** When you have written the main idea for all of the paragraphs onto the graphic organizer, return to the passage. For each paragraph, pull out 2-3 important facts, ideas, or supporting details. On the graphic organizer, write these key pieces of additional information under the main-idea phrase for that paragraph. Then draw a box around the main-idea and supporting details and move on to the next paragraph.

2. Practice Using the Graphic Organizer as a Study Tool. Demonstrate how the completed Main Idea Graphic Organizer can be a useful method to summarize and review the content of expository passages. Give students new practice passages and have them create their own graphic organizers. Provide feedback and encouragement as needed.

**Tips:**

**Use a Giant ‘Main Idea Map’ to Teach The Strategy.** You can make the teaching of this strategy fun and highly interactive by drawing a giant version of the Main Idea Graphic Organizer onto newsprint and laying it on the floor. Assign each individual in the class to read through a practice passage and write out a summary main-idea phrase and key ideas or facts for each paragraph. Review the passage with the group. For each paragraph, invite a volunteer to stand on the space on the giant organizer that corresponds to the paragraph and read aloud his or her summary for class feedback. Continue through the passage until all paragraphs have been reviewed and student volunteers have occupied each point on the graphic organizer.

**References:**

Berkowitz, S.J. (1986). Effects of instruction in text organization on sixth-grade students’ memory for expository reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 161-178.

# *Main Idea Graphic Organizer* (adapted from Berkowitz, 1986)

**Main Idea 1:**

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- 

**Main Idea 2:**

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- 

**Main Idea 6:**

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- 
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**Title:**

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**Main Idea 3:**

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**Main Idea 5:**

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**Main Idea 4:**

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# *Reading Comprehension: Mental Imagery: Improving Text Recall*

**Description:** By constructing “mental pictures” of what they are reading and closely studying text illustrations, students increase their reading comprehension.

Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy. (For effective-teaching tips, consult the guidelines presented in “*Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach*”).

## **Materials:**

- Overhead transparencies of sample passages taken from expository or narrative texts, transparency markers
- Student copies of practice expository or narrative passages (optional) or reading/text books

## **Preparation:**

- Prepare overheads of sample expository or narrative passages.

## **Intervention Script:**

1. Tell students that they can remember more of what they read by:
  - making pictures in their mind of what they are reading
  - carefully studying pictures or illustrations that appear in their reading or text books
2. Using a “think-aloud” approach, read through a short sample narrative or expository passage. Pause at several points to tell the class what “mental pictures” come to your mind as you read; ask students to describe their own mental imagery as they react to the same passage. As you come across pictures or illustrations in the passage, study them and reflect aloud on what clues they give you about the passage’s meaning.
3. Read aloud from additional passages. Stop at key points in the passage and call on students to relate their mental imagery evoked by the passage or to give their interpretation of the significance of illustrations or pictures.
4. When students are able to use mental imagery independently, use a prompt at the start of reading assignments to cue them to use the strategy. You might say, for example, “Now we are going to read about what life is like in a country village in Zimbabwe. Remember to make pictures in your head about what you are reading and study the pictures carefully.”

**Tips:**

**Have Your Students Become More Active Reading Participants.** As your students become more adept at using mental imagery and text illustrations to comprehend their reading, enlist them in critical discussions about the strengths or drawbacks of a particular book, chapter, or article. How clearly does the author write? Is it easy or difficult to form mental pictures of the passage's content, and why? How would they grade the author on the quality and clarity of his or her illustrations?

**References:**

Gambrell, L.B. & Bales, R.B. (1986). Mental imagery and the comprehension-monitoring performance of fourth- and fifth-grade poor readers. *Reading Research Quarterly, 21*, 454-464.

Gambrell, L.B. & Jawitz, P.B. (1993). Mental imagery, text illustrations, and children's story comprehension and recall. *Reading Research Quarterly, 23*, 265-273.

## *Reading Comprehension: Prior Knowledge: Activating the 'Known'*

**Description:** Through a series of guided questions, the instructor helps students activate their prior knowledge of a specific topic to help them comprehend the content of a story or article on the same topic. Linking new facts to prior knowledge increases a student's *inferential* comprehension (ability to place novel information in a meaningful context by comparing it to already-learned information).

Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy. (For effective-teaching tips, consult the guidelines presented in “*Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach*”).

### **Materials:**

- Overhead transparencies of practice reading passages and sample Text Prediction questions, transparency markers
- Student copies of practice reading passages (optional) or reading/text books, blank paper and pencil or pen

### **Preparation:**

- Prepare overheads of sample passages.
- Locate 3 main ideas per passage and—for each idea—develop a prior knowledge question and a prediction question (see below).

### **Intervention Script:**

1. Introduce this strategy to the class:
  1. Explain the Benefit of Using Prior Knowledge to Understand a Reading Passage: Tell students that recalling their prior experiences (“their own life”) can help them to understand the content of their reading. New facts make sense only when we connect them to what we already know.
  2. Demonstrate the Text Prediction Strategy. Select a sample passage and use a “think-aloud” approach to show students how to use the text-prediction strategy. (Note: To illustrate how the strategy is used, this intervention script uses the attached example, *Attending Public School in Japan*.)

**Step 1: Think About What and Why:** Describe what strategy you are about to apply and the reason for doing so. You might say, for example, “*I am about to read a short article on public schools in Japan. Before I read the article, though, I should think about my life experiences and what they might tell me about the topic that I am about to read about. By thinking about my own life, I will better understand the article.*”

Step 2: Preview Main Ideas from the Reading and Pose Prior Knowledge and Prediction Questions. One at a time, pose three main ideas that appear in the article or story. For each key idea, present one question requiring that readers tap their own *prior knowledge* of the topic and another that prompts them to predict how *the article or story* might deal with the topic.

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Here is a typical question cycle, composed of a main idea statement, prior knowledge question, prediction question, and student opportunity to write a response.

*“The article that we are going to read describes how different the writing system used in Japanese schools is from our own writing system”* [A main idea from the passage].

*“What are your own attitudes and experiences about writing?”* [prior knowledge question] Answer this question aloud, and then encourage students to respond.

*“What do you think that the article will say about the Japanese writing system?”* [prediction question] Answer this question aloud, and then seek student responses.

*“Now, write down your own ideas about what you think the article will say about the Japanese writing system.”* [student written response] As students write their own responses, model for them by writing out your answer to the question on the overhead transparency.

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Step 3: Students Read the Story or Article Independently. Once you have presented three main ideas and students have responded to all questions, have them read the selection independently.

2. When students have learned the Text Prediction strategy, use it regularly to introduce new reading assignments.

**Tips:**

**Use Text Prediction to Prepare Students for Homework Reading.** You can apply the Text Prediction strategy to boost student comprehension of homework reading assignments. When assigning the homework passages, take students through the steps in the strategy. Then require that students take their own written predictions home to compare to their actual reading.

**Transition from Group to Individual Application of the Strategy.** As your students become proficient in applying the strategy, you can gradually train them to use the strategy independently. As the instructor, you might hand out the three main ideas for a story and then direct students to take each idea and write out (1) a short account of their

own experiences with the topic, and (2) a prediction of what the article or story will say about the main idea. You can collect these written assignments to monitor student understanding and follow-through in using the technique.

**References:**

Hansen, J. & Pearson, P.D. (1983). An instructional study: Improving the inferential comprehension of good and poor fourth-grade readers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75, 821-829.

## Attending Public School in Japan

Japan is a country of 125 million inhabitants, with a rich and ancient cultural tradition. The geography is varied, with many mountains and valleys.

The Japanese language is quite different from English. In fact, linguists (researchers who study to form and structure of languages) disagree on how Japanese evolved as a language and how closely it is related to other world languages. Because Japan is an archipelago (a series of islands), sections of the country were once quite isolated from one another. Even now, throughout Japan there are a number of different *dialects* (variant spoken versions of the language) that can make it difficult at times for a speaker of one dialect to understand a speaker of another dialect.

The food in Japanese public schools is generally very healthy but quite different than students are used to eating in America. Dishes may contain combinations of raw or cooked seafood, vegetables, noodles, rice, or seaweed. While meat is commonly served, the portions are smaller than are typical in American meals. Fast food has become popular in Japan, but diners must also be able to handle chopsticks.

In Japan, all children attend primary (elementary) school and middle school. Although high school is not mandatory in Japan, virtually all high-school-age students attend them. Unlike most American school systems, high schools in Japan are selective. Students must take competitive exams to be admitted to these schools, which are largely designed to prepare students for college. Many students choose to attend vocational schools, rather than academic high schools.

In public school, students must learn four separate writing systems: Kanji, hiragana, katakana, and romaji. The most challenging of these systems, kanji, is based on Chinese ideograms (words written as a pictorial series of brush- or pen-strokes) and takes years to learn to read and write properly.

Most high school students in Japan will tell you that they have no assigned homework. However, Japanese students regularly spend *several hours* per night reviewing their lessons and reading ahead on the material that will be covered in school the following day. Japanese students, like their American counterparts, love television shows, movies, computer games, and other forms of popular entertainment.

## *Reading Comprehension: Question-Generation*

**Description:** Students are taught to boost their comprehension of expository passages by (1) locating the main idea or key ideas in the passage and (2) generating questions based on that information.

Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy. (For effective-teaching tips, consult the guidelines presented in “*Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach*”).

### **Materials:**

- Overhead transparencies of practice reading passages, transparency markers
- Student copies of practice reading passages (optional) or reading/text books

### **Preparation:**

- Prepare overheads of sample passages.

### **Intervention Script:**

1. Introduce this strategy to the class:

A. **Locating Explicit Main Idea:** Tell students that some passages have summary sentences that state the main idea or “gist” of the paragraph or passage. Using examples of passages with explicit main ideas, train students to identify and underline main-idea sentences.

B. **Finding Key Facts.** In some passages, the main idea is implied rather than explicitly stated. Readers must first identify the key facts or ideas of the passage before they can summarize the passage’s main idea.

Using examples of passages with implied main ideas, locate and circle key facts or ideas. Describe to students how you distinguished this central information from less important details. Have students practice this skill on additional practice passages.

C. **Writing a “Gist” Sentence.** Show students a passage with an implied main idea. Circle all key ideas or facts. Demonstrate how to write a “gist” sentence (one that is built from the identified key ideas and summarizes the paragraph’s main idea). Emphasize that the reader may have link information from different sections of the passage to build a gist sentence. Have students practice this skill on additional practice passages.

D. **Generating Questions.** Tell students that careful readers often construct questions about what they are reading to help them learn. Put up a list of ‘signal words’ that can be used as question-starters: e.g., who, what, where, when, why, how. Using sample passages, show students how to convert

explicit main-idea sentences or reader-created “gist” sentences into questions. Point out that these questions can be a good study tool because they are linked to answers that the student has already located in the passage.

2. Give students selected practice passages and instruct them to apply the full question-generation strategy. Provide feedback and encouragement as needed.

**Tips:**

**Use “Gist” Sentences to Organize Student Research Notes.** When students are writing research papers, they often find it challenging to synthesize their scattered research notes into an orderly outline with sequentially presented main ideas. Students who have mastered the skill of assembling key ideas into “gist” sentences can identify their most important research notes, copy these notes individually onto index cards, and group cards with related notes. The student can then write a single “gist” sentence for each pile of note cards and use these sentences as the starting point for a paper outline.

**Collect Exemplary Examples of Student-Generated Questions as Study Aids.** If your class is using an assigned textbook, you may want to collect well-written student-generated questions and share them with other students. Or assign students different sections of an article or book chapter and require that they ‘teach’ the content by presenting their text-generated questions and sharing the correct answers.

**Select Student Questions As Quiz or Test Items.** You can build classroom interest (and competition!) in using this question-generation strategy by occasionally using one or more student text-questions as quiz or test items.

**References:**

Davey, B., & McBride, S. (1986). Effects of question-generation training on reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78, 256-262.

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# *Reading Comprehension: Text Lookback*

**Description:** Text lookback is a simple strategy that students can use to boost their recall of expository prose by looking back in the text for important information.

Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy. (For effective-teaching tips, consult the guidelines presented in “*Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach*”).

## **Materials:**

- Overhead transparencies of short (100-200 word) passages from expository text and teacher-prepared text and lookback/think questions, transparency markers
- Student copies of expository text passages and text-lookback /think questions

## **Preparation:**

- Create at least 3 lookback questions and one think question for each expository text passage selected

## **Intervention Script:**

1. Introduce the text-lookback strategy by telling students that people cannot always remember everything that they read. If we read an article or book chapter, though, and are asked a ‘fact’ question about it that we cannot answer, we can always look back in the article to find the information that we need.
2. Describe for the class the difference between lookback and think questions. An example of an explanation that you might use is:

*“When we are asked questions about an article, sometimes the answer can be found directly in the article and sometimes it cannot be found directly.”*

*“Lookback questions are those that tell us that the answer can be found right in the article. For example, if a question uses phrases such as in the article or in the author’s words, these phrases would be clues that the question is a lookup question and that we can find the answer in the article. “*

*“Think questions are those that ask you to give your own opinion, beliefs, or ideas. Our answers to these questions are based on our own ideas or thoughts about the topic. For example, if a question uses phrases such as in your opinion or what do you think, these phrases would be clues that the question is a think question and that the answer cannot be found in the article. “*

3. Read aloud through the sample expository passage. Then read the series of 4 text-lookback/think questions to the class. As you read each question, highlight for

students the word clues that indicate whether the question is a think or text-lookback question.

4. Tell students that they must reread carefully to find the answer to a text-lookback question. However, they can save time by first *skimming* the article to get to the general section where the answer to the question is probably located. To skim, the student should:
  - read the text-lookback question carefully and underline the section that tells the reader what to look for (e.g., “What does the article say are the five most endangered species of whales today?”).
  - look for titles, headings, or illustrations in the article that might tell the reader where the information that he or she is looking for is probably located
  - look at the beginning and end sentences in individual paragraphs to see if that paragraph might contain the desired information.
5. “Thinking aloud”, demonstrate for students how to skim the example article to locate efficiently the answer to each text-lookback question.
6. Present additional example articles with text-lookback questions and monitor student mastery of the technique. Assign students to use the strategy independently when, under your supervision, they can distinguish reliably between think and text-lookback questions and are able to find the answers to text-lookback questions in the text.

**Tips:**

**Have Students Write Text-Lookback Questions for Assigned Reading.** For homework, encourage students to compose several challenging text-lookback questions based on their assigned reading. Use these questions later for class review.

**References:**

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# Extended Classroom Discussion: A Protocol

## Classroom Literacy Strategies: Extended Discussions

### *Why This Instructional Goal is Important*

Extended, guided group discussion is a powerful means to help students to learn vocabulary and advanced concepts. Discussion can also model for students various 'thinking processes' and cognitive strategies (Kamil et al. 2008, p. 22). To be effective, guided discussion should go beyond students answering a series of factual questions posed by the teacher: Quality discussions are typically open-ended and exploratory in nature, allowing for multiple points of view (Kamil et al., 2008).

When group discussion is used regularly and well in instruction, students show increased growth in literacy skills. However, discussion is often underused as an instructional method. In one large research study of middle and high school language arts classes, for example, teachers were found on average to devote less than 2 minutes per class period to discussion activities (Kamil et al., 2008). Guided discussion holds an additional benefit: Content-area teachers can use it to demonstrate the 'habits of mind' and patterns of thinking of experts in various their discipline: e.g., historians, mathematicians, chemists, engineers, literacy critics, etc.

### *Strategies to Promote This Instructional Goal*

**Use a 'Standard Protocol' to Structure Guided Discussions** (Kamil et al., 2008). Good guided classwide discussions elicit a wide range of student opinions, subject individual viewpoints to critical scrutiny in a supportive manner, put forth alternative views, and bring closure by summarizing the main points of the discussion. Teachers can use a simple structure to effectively and reliably organize their discussions:

- A. Pose questions to the class that require students to explain their positions and the reasoning to support those positions.
- B. When needed, 'think aloud' as the discussion leader to model good reasoning practices such as taking a clear stand on a topic or providing an explanation of why one supports a particular position.
- C. Supportively challenge student views by offering possible counter arguments that students must attempt to answer.
- D. Single out and mention examples of effective student reasoning.
- E. Avoid being overly directive; the purpose of extended discussions is to more fully investigate and think about complex topics, not to push students toward a pre-determined viewpoint or finding.
- F. At the conclusion of the discussion, sum up the general ground covered in the discussion and highlight the main ideas covered.

Teachers can train students to lead discussions (with teacher coaching as needed) and have those students moderate extended discussions in whole-group or cooperative learning format. Teachers can use the standard discussion protocol provided here as a starting point for training students as discussion leaders.

### *Troubleshooting Tips*

**Students Are Reluctant to Participate in Discussions** (Kamil et al., 2008). As the discussion leader, be sure to make the discussion activity a 'safe' one in which all students feel that their

thoughts are valued. Provide enough structure to the activity that students know clearly what is expected of them. If necessary when first training students to participate in extended discussions, provide texts of high interest—even if those texts are only marginally related to course content. As students are drawn into discussion by those high-interest texts and class participation increases, the teacher can start to use texts for future discussions that overlap more with the curriculum.

**Teachers Lack the Time for Frequent Use of Extended Discussion.** Guided discussion is an effective method for enhancing and verifying student understanding of course content (Kamil et al., 2008). If class time is limited, the instructor should reserve discussion time at least for those course topics and concepts that are potentially most complex, challenging, ambiguous, or open to misinterpretation.

**Teachers Require Behavior Management Training to Manage Discussions.** Extended discussions can require flexible behavior management strategies to both promote student involvement and maintain classroom order. Some teachers may be reluctant to engage in sustained discussions in their classrooms because of behavior management concerns. One solution is for the school to offer staff development to teachers on how to effectively manage a classroom during large-group or small-group discussion activities (Kamil et al., 2008).

### *Building Capacity*

**Provide ‘Discussion Coaches’.** Identify teachers in the school who have the formal training and/or experience to run effective discussion groups. Make these teachers available to coach other instructors in how to integrate discussion into classroom instruction. Consider offering the option of having these ‘discussion coaches’ visit classrooms to actually demonstrate discussion techniques with students, as well as to observe and provide feedback to other teachers on those educators’ use of discussion strategies.

**Allow Teachers Opportunities to Share Their Successes in Using Extended Discussion.** It is not easy for instructors to adopt new classroom practices. Schools can assist teachers to make the transition to using discussion more creatively and widely by allowing them opportunities to communicate regularly with their colleagues (perhaps by content area) to share ideas for discussion topics, formats, etc.

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# Participant Activities

## Engaging the Reluctant Teacher: Seven Reasons Why Instructors May Resist Implementing Classroom RTI Literacy Interventions

**Directions:** Read through each of the possible reasons listed below for why a teacher may be 'reluctant' to use classroom RTI literacy interventions and select the **top 3** reasons that **MOST** apply to your school. Number those selected items in descending order of importance. For each of the explanations that you select, generate ideas (page 2) to overcome teacher reluctance.

	Teachers believe that their 'job' is to provide content-area instruction, not to teach vocabulary and reading-comprehension strategies (Kamil et al., 2008).
	Teachers believe that they lack the skills to implement classroom vocabulary-building and reading-comprehension strategies. (Fisher, 2007; Kamil et al., 2008).
	Teachers feel that they don't have adequate time to implement vocabulary-building and reading-comprehension strategies in the classroom. (Kamil et al., 2008; Walker, 2004).
	Teachers are not convinced that there will be an adequate instructional 'pay-off' in their content-area if they implement literacy-building strategies in the classroom (Kamil et al., 2008).
	Teachers are reluctant to put extra effort into implementing interventions for students who appear unmotivated (Walker, 2004) when there are other, 'more deserving' students who would benefit from teacher attention.
	Teachers are afraid that, if they use a range of classroom strategies to promote literacy (e.g., extended discussion, etc.), they will have difficulty managing classroom behaviors (Kamil et al., 2008).
	Teachers believe that 'special education is magic' (Martens, 1993). This belief implies that general education interventions will be insufficient to meet the student's needs and that the student will benefit only if he or she receives special education services.
	Other: _____ _____ _____

## Brainstorm Ideas to Overcome Teacher 'Reluctance'...

Concern 1

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Concern 2

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Concern 3

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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Martens, B. K. (1993). A case against magical thinking in school-based intervention. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 4*(2), 185-189.

Walker, H. M. (2004). Use of evidence-based interventions in schools: Where we've been, where we are, and where we need to go. *School Psychology Review, 33*, 398-407.

## Weaving Tier 1 Literacy-Building Strategies into the Instructional Fabric of the Middle or High School: Just a Few Easy Steps...

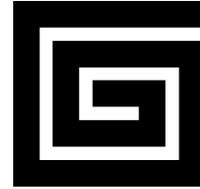
**Directions:** Review each of the goals below for implementing effective Tier 1 literacy-building strategies in secondary classrooms. For each goal, plan your school's next steps to implement those goals.

Literacy-Intervention Goal	Your School's 'Next Steps'...
<input type="checkbox"/> Enlist teacher understanding and support across the school to expand the number and quality of Tier 1 literacy strategies being used in content-area classes.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a <b>bank</b> of Tier 1 literacy intervention strategies to support vocabulary instruction, reading comprehension, and extended discussion--to be shared with all teachers.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a <b>core set</b> of classroom literacy strategies to be used consistently <b>across</b> classrooms and grade levels.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide <b>training support</b> (e.g., staff development, coaching) to classroom teachers in the use of these core strategies.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop methods for <b>documenting</b> teacher use of Tier 1 interventions and for collecting classroom data about the effectiveness of those interventions.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide <b>administrative oversight</b> to ensure that core Tier 1 literacy intervention strategies are being used consistently and correctly across all content-area classrooms.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Appoint ' <b>knowledge brokers</b> ' in the school or district who agree to stay current on evolving secondary best instructional practices / Tier 1 interventions for literacy areas such as vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and extended discussion. Create periodic opportunities for these knowledge brokers to share updated information with school and district RTI stakeholders.	

# Defining & Accessing 'Research-Based' Resources

# Finding a Way Out of the 'Research-Based' Maze: A Guide for Schools

While the RTI model directs that educators use instructional and behavioral strategies that have been demonstrated through research to be effective, no uniform guidelines exist in schools to identify interventions that are 'evidence-based' (Odom et al., 2005). Furthermore, the number of interventions that are well-supported by research varies across academic and behavioral domains (Kratochwill, Clements, & Kalymon, 2007). In most school systems, even the instruction and intervention techniques that teachers routinely use in classrooms rest on an uncertain research base (Fuchs, & Deshler, 2007). Schools must therefore take responsibility to evaluate core instructional programs and interventions and to decide whether they are sufficiently supported by research to be used for RTI.



There is no simple sequence of steps that will infallibly lead schools to the right empirically supported intervention ideas. However, schools can become expert in evaluating whether instructional or intervention techniques have been adequately researched by:

- Defining in detail the academic or behavioral needs that require interventions
- Developing consensus about what is meant by 'evidence-based'
- Using on-line rating sites when possible to evaluate commercial intervention products
- Knowing the research-based components that are building blocks of effective interventions
- Staying current with emerging intervention research through 'knowledge brokers'.

- 
1. **Define the Academic or Behavioral Needs Requiring Intervention in Detail and Using Standard Terminology.** Before seeking evidence-based interventions, the school should first carefully define the academic or behavioral need(s) to be the focus of the intervention—and use standard terminology to describe them.

Effective interventions cannot be reliably identified and matched to student needs if those needs are loosely or vaguely defined. For example, an overly broad academic goal statement is that a student will 'know her letters.' Here is more focused goal statement: *"When shown any letter in uppercase or lowercase form, the student will accurately identify the letter name and its corresponding sound without assistance."* As an added benefit, when problem identification statements of student needs are thoroughly and carefully articulated, the probability increases significantly that schools will be able to put together an effective intervention plan (Bergan, 1995).

Also, when possible, academic behaviors selected as intervention targets should be described using standard terminology to make it easier to locate appropriate evidence-based intervention ideas. For example, student 'letter knowledge' is often described in the research literature as 'alphabetic understanding', a skill that combines with 'phonological recoding' to make up the larger skill set of 'alphabets' (University of Oregon, n.d.).

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2. **Develop Consensus in Your School About What is Meant by 'Evidence-Based'.** At present, there is little agreement among intervention experts on a definition of 'evidence-based'. Therefore, schools must develop their own criteria to identify 'evidence-based' interventions. They can move forward in this process by:

*Compiling a list of trusted professional organizations and journals.* As a starting point, schools may wish to compile a list of professional organizations and educational research journals that they find generally provide useful and trustworthy information about evidence-based interventions. For example, the National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the International Reading Association are examples of reputable organizations that schools may turn to for intervention information, while the School Psychology Review, the Journal of Special Education, and Reading Research Quarterly are examples of reputable peer-reviewed educational journals. The school can continue to add to this list of trusted organizations and journals over time.

*Drafting a definition of 'evidence-based.'* Schools should write their own definition of what the term 'evidence-based' means. Useful guidelines for defining high-quality research come from the International Reading Association (2002), which states that a reading program or practice can be regarded as evidence-based if it is backed by research that shows its effectiveness. According to IRA, though, research studies that support research-based interventions in reading should also:

- Produce 'objective' data—so that different evaluators should be able to draw similar conclusions when reviewing the data from the studies.
- Have valid research results that can reasonably be applied to the kinds of real-world reading tasks that children must master in actual classrooms.
- Yield reliable and replicable findings that would not be expected to change significantly based on such arbitrary factors as the day or time that data on the interventions were collected or who collected them.
- Employ current best-practice methods in observation or experimentation to reduce the probability that other sources of potential bias crept into the studies and compromised the results.
- Be checked before publication by independent experts, who review the methods, data, and conclusions of the studies.

*Adopting a 'research continuum.'* Schools may sometimes find that no interventions in a particular academic or behavioral area meet the stringent criteria to be regarded as 'evidence-based'. In such instances, schools must be prepared to sift through existing research to locate the best available intervention ideas, even if the research base that supports them falls short of the ideal. It can be useful in this sifting process for schools to use a 'research continuum' that establishes categories for interventions in descending levels of research quality. The continuum would be used as an aid to judge whether specific instructional practices or interventions are supported by research of sufficient quantity and quality for use in schools.

To cite one example, the K-8 Access Center has developed a research continuum that categorizes programs according to the quality of the research that supports them. (While this continuum applies to programs designed for children with special needs, it can also be applied to RTI interventions for struggling students in general education settings.) Programs backed by sufficient high-quality research are defined as 'evidence-based'. Programs whose research is of somewhat lesser quality are defined as 'promising practices'. Programs that lack adequate research are defined as 'emerging practices'. View the K-8 Access Center research continuum at:  
[http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training\\_resources/documents/ACResearchApproachFormatted.pdf](http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/documents/ACResearchApproachFormatted.pdf)

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3. **Use Impartial On-Line Rating Sites to Evaluate Commercial Intervention Products.** Websites now exist that provide ratings and reviews of commercial instructional and intervention products. The best of these sites apply evidence-based criteria to identify the most effective programs for schools to consider.

Schools should use such sites as one resource when determining whether specific educational products are evidence-based. However, here are two cautionary points to consider

- *Reliance on Existing Research.* Intervention-rating sites typically lack the ability to independently research commercial products. Instead, they depend on existing research studies for their analyses. Therefore, if a commercial product is relatively new and has not yet been researched or if the only available studies of that product are of lesser quality, that product may be screened out and not reviewed by these rating sites.
- *Potential Delays in Program Ratings.* The resources of intervention-rating sites are limited, so there can be a considerable delay between the advent of a new commercial product and the time when the rating site issues a report about the product's effectiveness. Limited resources also means that, for the foreseeable future, no single site is likely to have sufficient resources to rate commercial instructional and intervention products in all academic and behavioral areas.

Here are two recommended impartial intervention-rating sites:

- *What Works Clearinghouse(WWC).* Probably the most influential website for rating commercial products for general instruction and intervention is the What Works Clearinghouse (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>). This site is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences and bills itself as 'a central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education.' The WWC reviews existing research on commercial products to determine if they show evidence of being effective for instruction or supplemental intervention with school-age populations. Just as important, the WWC screens out those research studies about a product that fail to meet its rigorous research standards. The WWC compiles 'intervention reports' that summarize its findings of whether a particular program or product meets criteria of being 'evidence-based'. The WWC has rated programs in a number of academic and behavioral domains.
- Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR). The Florida Center for Reading Research (<http://www.fcrr.org/>) is a great source of general information about early reading instruction. The site also has reviewed a number of reading programs for the primary grades. While the FCRR uses different criteria than the WWC to judge the effectiveness of reading programs, it does review research supporting various reading programs and summarizes the results in report format. Reports include detailed descriptions of the reading programs as well as a listing of their specific strengths and weaknesses. A full listing of reading programs reviewed by the FCRR can be found at <http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/LReports.aspx>

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#### 4. Know the Research-Based Components That Are Building Blocks of Effective Interventions.

Research indicates (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008) that, to be maximally effective, interventions should

- be matched to the student's academic needs
- be delivered using explicit instruction
- provide the student with adequate success in the instructional task
- give the student a high opportunity to respond
- provide timely performance feedback.

Schools that know these 5 basic components that make academic interventions effective have more options as they design intensive intervention plans for struggling students. For example, a school may decide not use an evidence-based commercial intervention program—either because one does not exist, is too expensive, or is otherwise not readily available. But if the school designs an intervention of its own to include the effective components described here, that school is likely to create an intervention that is effective (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008). Or in another scenario, the school may locate a commercial intervention product that looks promising but that does not yet have a sufficient body of research to support it. If the school can verify that the commercial program contains the five effective intervention components, it can have increased confidence that the program will work.

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5. **Keep Up With Emerging Intervention Research Through 'Knowledge Brokers'.** Districts must stay current on a large amount of intervention research in their quest to build and maintain a knowledge base of the most effective instructional and behavior management strategies. One idea to help schools to manage the load of intervention research is to divide it up by appointing 'knowledge brokers' (Ervin & Schaughency, 2008). Districts first define manageable and sensible intervention topic areas, such as 'alphabetics' and 'reading fluency'. Then district or school staff members are selected to serve as 'knowledge brokers' based on their training, experience, and/or interest. Knowledge brokers regularly read educational research journals and other publications from reputable organizations or government agencies to keep up with emerging research in their intervention topic area. They periodically share their expertise with other district RTI planners to ensure that the schools are using the best available intervention strategies.

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