Close Strategic Reading and Complexity

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Our students need to be able to use knowledge, not just know about things.   Understanding is about making connections among and between things, about deep and not surface knowledge and about great complexity and not simplicity.

Vito Perrone

Three Principles of Reading Achievement

❖ **The Reading Principle---**Readers must read extensively in text they can and want to read. The more kids read the better they read. "Reading volume—the amount students read in and out of school—significantly affects the development of reading rate and fluency, vocabulary, general knowledge of the world, overall verbal ability and last, but not least, academic achievement". (Cunningham and Stanovich 1998 a and b) So we need to have text on a wide range of topics and on many levels readily accessible for the kids in our classrooms. (Allington 2005) Readers need a multi-source multi-genre curriculum if they are to read and understand.

❖ **The Response Principle---**Readers must have opportunities to respond to their reading by talking, writing and drawing about their reading. The best way to better understand what we read is simply to talk about it. We must increase the amount of purposeful student-to-student talk in our classrooms. (Allington 2002) Book clubs, Lit Circles (Daniels 02) Read Write and Talk (Harvey and Goudvis 05) all provide opportunities for readers to talk and write about their reading. Writing in relation to reading leads to improved literacy achievement. And don't forget authentic artistic response for those who want to draw, sing, act etc.

❖ **The Explicit Instruction Principle—**Readers need explicit instruction in the strategies to decode text as needed. They do not need phonics instruction if they can already read. And they need explicit instruction in the strategies to comprehend text. (Pearson et al 1992, Keene and Zimmerman 2007 Harvey and Goudvis 2007) Teachers need to make their thinking visible by modeling how they use a strategy and then give kids time to practice collaboratively and independently.

 "The critical role of reading widely cannot be overemphasized. Many parents, administrators, and teachers still believe that literacy is primarily a matter of skill instruction. The importance of practicing, using and "living" literacy is often overlooked. Perhaps this is partly because we live in a society that does not always practice the literacy it preaches and supposedly values—libraries are underfunded, television is the predominant source of entertainment and information and 70% of all reading is done by only 10 % of the population. (Sanders 1994) We know that parents, teachers, and communities can dramatically affect how much children read.(Gambrell, 1996) But we also know that a relatively simple intervention—reading---can have a powerful effect on students' comprehension, thinking knowledge of the world, and choices in higher education and life careers." (Shefelbine 1998)

In short , we need to build in a ton of time for our kids to read, just plain read. We need to show them how and then let them read.   As Harvey Daniels says, "Why not just have kids go, choose a book, read it, talk to someone about it and then get another one?" Worksheets don't help. But thinksheets do--graphic organizers, post-its, margin annotations-give readers a place to work out their thinking so they can learn, understand and remember. Reading, talking, writing and thinking are what are kids need to be doing. Just plain reading and giving kids time to respond to text will make all of the difference.

(Allington 2004, Harvey 2008)

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(Allington 2004, Harvey 2008)

Strategies for Active Reading

Active Readers:

- ### Monitor Comprehension
  - listen to their inner voice and follow the inner conversation,
  - notice when meaning breaks down and/or mind wanders
  - leave tracks of their thinking by jotting thoughts when reading
  - stop, think and react to information
  - talk about the reading before, during and after reading
  - respond to reading in writing
  - employ "fix up strategies" ---reread for clarification, read on to construct meaning, use context to break down an unfamiliar word, skip difficult parts and continue on to see if meaning becomes clear, check and recheck answers and thinking, examine evidence
  .

- ### Activate and Connect to Background Knowledge
  - refer to prior personal experience
  - activate prior knowledge of the content, style, structure, features and genre
  - connect the new to the known- use what they know to understand new information
  - merge their thinking with new learning to build knowledge base
  - activate their schema to read strategically

- ### Ask Questions
  - wonder about the content, concepts, outcomes and genre
  - question the author
  - question the ideas and the information
  - read to discover answers and gain information
  - wonder about the text to understand big ideas
  - do further research and investigation to gain information

(Harvey and Goudvis 2007)

❑ **Infer and Visualize Meaning**

- use context clues to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words
- draw conclusions from text evidence
- predict outcomes, events and characters' actions
- surface underlying themes
- answer questions that are not explicitly answered in the text
- create interpretations based on text evidence
- visualize as well as hear, taste, smell and feel the words and ideas

❑ **Determine Importance**

- sift important ideas from interesting but less important details
- target key information and code the text to hold thinking
- distinguish between what the reader thinks is important and what the author most wants the reader to take away
- construct main ideas from supporting details
- choose what to remember

❑ **Synthesize and Summarize**

- take stock of meaning while reading
- add to knowledge base
- paraphrase information
- move from facts to ideas
- use the parts to see the whole--read for the gist
- rethink misconceptions and tie opinions to the text
- revise thinking during and after reading
- merge what is known with new information to form a new idea, perspective, or insight
- generate knowledge

(Harvey and Goudvis 2007)

Text complexity is not merely about dense text and technical vocabulary. It is about complicated ideas with multiple perspectives that can be presented in many different ways.

Stephanie Harvey 2013

To teach students to read closely for understanding…
Teachers must,

- Have read and thought about the piece thoroughly before using it

- Choose text that kids can sink their teeth into – complex text with multiple ideas and perspectives

- Recognize that readers need to slow down their rate and re-read to better understand

- Teach students to stop, think and react to information while reading

- Model text annotation and share with students that annotating is the most powerful thinking tool when reading

- Guide and encourage discussion among and between students about the test

- Share the different text types of all genres so that students can identify the type and think about the characteristics to better understand when reading

- Teach students to consider all aspects of the text to get at the deeper meaning – to note signal words and phrases, visual and text features, and text organizers such as chapters, parts, sections, etc.

- Ask questions that draw the reader's attention to the point of view, the text structure and the multiple perspectives

- Teach students to use context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts

- Challenge students to use text evidence to infer the themes and big ideas

- Encourage students to make connections among and between texts around the bid ideas, themes and essential questions that emerge from the anchor text

(Harvey 2014)

Discussion Prompts to Support Understanding of Complex Text

What in the text makes you say that?

How do you know?

What makes you think that?

Where is the evidence for that?

What might be some additional interpretations?

Who has another idea?

What is the evidence for that idea?

Who might disagree?

What makes you disagree?

How might you explain the different interpretations?

How might you convince someone to change their mind?

What is the author trying to prove?

What kind of proof does the author use?

What is the author assuming I will agree with?

Is there something the author leaves out that would strengthen the argument?

Is there something the author included that hurts the argument?

Does the author adequately defend the argument?

(Johnston 2011, Harvey 2013)

Close Reading of Complex Text

1st Reading — Focus on what you know rather than what you don't understand

2nd Reading — Ask questions and use what you came to understand during the first reading to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts for deeper understanding

Successive Readings — Note previous annotations, address your questions, build on what you know to deepen comprehension, infer for a more robust understanding

What it Says	Questions	What it Means

(Harvey 2014)

Signal Words and Phrases

Signal words cue readers to pay attention to what's coming up. They signal a change in thinking, a contrast or a similar relationship between ideas, a conclusion etc. As kids read informational text, they will encounter a wide variety of signal words and phrases. Co-Construct an anchor chart of signal words for display in the classroom. And have kids be on the lookout for signal words in their own reading and have them note the purpose. Paying attention to signal words and phrases is a necessary skill for strategic readers as they read nonfiction in their daily lives and when the encounter nonfiction on the test!

Signal Word	Purpose
Surprisingly	Be prepared to expect the unexpected
Importantly	Signals importance! Stop and pay attention
But	Signals a change to come
However	Prepare to change your thinking
Likewise	Cues a similarity
Consequently,	Signals a result/cause and effect
Before, After, Next, Finally, Then, Now	All show sequence

Signal Phrase	Purpose
In conclusion	Wraps up and synthesizes the information
In Sum	Wraps up and synthesizes
There are several factors	Signals an answer to a big question or idea
There are several reasons	Same as above
There are several purposes	Same as above
As opposed to	Signals a contrast
On the other hand	Signals a change to come
In addition to	Adds another factor
Because of	Cause and effect

(Harvey 2014)

Simple Problems vs. Complex Problems

Simple problems are often singular in nature requiring less deep thinking to understand and solve.	***Complex problems*** are comprised of multi-faceted, multi-dimensional issues with multiple perspectives.

Simple Problems

- Are easily solved
- Don't require a great deal of thought to solve
- Don't take much time to solve
- Are generally less important in the long run
- Can often be solved alone, without much help

Complex Problems

- Are generally difficult to solve
- Require a great deal of thought to solve
- May take a lot of time to solve
- The solution is often very important
- People may have many different ideas about how to solve the problem
- Generally require a good deal of collaboration and cooperation to solve

(Harvey 2013)

Argument

A good argument expresses a point of view, uses evidence to support that view and demonstrates understanding and the ability to use and apply the information in ways that go beyond simply what we have read or heard. It allows the learner to turn information into knowledge, actively use it and convince the listener or reader of their point of view.

Making an argument –Expressing a point of view in a piece of writing or a conversation and supporting it with evidence. An argument needs to be based on an issue that we can sink our teeth into. It must make a significant point that is worth arguing for.

To make a decent Argument— We must think critically, reason through the problem, make choices and weigh evidence. We must understand the issues and ideas being expressed. We must stake out a position and prove why it is a good position for a thinking person to hold.

Argument is more than facts and details—Argument involves much more than a number of facts and details. Facts change so we must learn to make a convincing argument and cite the evidence.

Making a claim—The big idea in an argument is often called a claim. A claim is an idea that is backed up with evidence to support it. It is much more than simply accumulating facts and details.

To begin—We ask ourselves "What is my point? This helps to avoid an "information dump". An argument worth making tends to involve a range of strands, with multiple perspectives and a variety of stake holders. It is complex and takes time to develop.

To develop an argument-- We define our terms and prove our claim with evidence. We do not give up on our point, but back up our point

with evidence. The strength of the evidence and how we use it makes or breaks the argument.

Be consistent with evidence—We don't throw in the whole kitchen sink of evidence. We make sure that the evidence in each section supports the claim of that section. Our goal is always to convince the reader or listener of our point of view.

Prepare for a counterargument—Thinking ahead about others who might disagree with our point of view, or what other stake holders might say to counter our argument, shows we have thought deeply about it. We demonstrate deep understanding of our argument by anticipating and addressing objections or counterarguments. We can ask ourselves how someone who would disagree might counter our argument. We can interview people who we think may hold a different position and hear their counter argument. We best consider one or two counter arguments in depth rather than a whole host of counter arguments.

Keep the audience in mind—We must state our claim and evidence clearly. An argument is not just our opinion, but our point of view supported by evidence. We think of our audience as someone who is smart and disagrees with us. We need solid proof to convince the audience.

Critical Reading— Reading with a critical, independent, thoughtful eye is crucial when researching the argument. The writer of every text has an agenda. Everything is written from someone's perspective. We don't worry about this, but keep it in mind. We annotate the text with our questions, new learning, thoughts, opinions, ideas and confusions as we read. We pay attention to how the author crafts an argument and borrow that when we craft our own (assuming we are convinced by the argument.)

(Harvey 2014)