“I just read—that’s it!”
Encouraging Children to *THINK* While They Read.

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Third Grade

May 2, 2010
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Background Information

Descriptions of Teaching Context:

As a Professional Development Intern through Penn State University, I have worked in a self-contained classroom at Gray’s Woods Elementary in the State College Area School District (SCASD) during the 2009-2010 school year. This third grade class consists of twenty-four students, eleven female and thirteen male. Each student has unique academic, behavioral and social needs. Of the twenty-four students, there is one Korean male, one African-American female, and twenty-two White students. The majority of these students come from affluent middle to upper class families. Most parents of these children possess a degree and work either with Penn State University or with another local business.

The students in my classroom are academically heterogeneous. There are eight high-achieving students that often exceed expectations across most subjects. Thirteen students perform at an average level across most subjects. Finally, three children have been identified as needing something extra to aid learning and to keep pace with the class. All three of these students receive Title 1 help in math, reading or both, as they need one-on-one attention in order to understand concepts and complete assignments in a timely manner.

Because my inquiry directly relates to reading instruction in my classroom, it is important to note reading abilities in my classroom. Based on PSSA scores and other reading assessments six of my students are considered advanced, which means above grade level, 15 of my students are considered proficient, which means they can read on grade level, and finally, three students are considered basic or below basic, which means they are reading below a third grade level. Two of the three basic or below basic students receive Title 1 reading support.
As a result, my mentor and I split the class into two reading groups in order to teach additional comprehension strategies to a smaller group of struggling readers. These two groups are reasonably flexible, meaning that if a student proved that they are comprehending text when they read, they can move to the other group. Vise versa, students who seem to need more help with comprehension can also be moved.

I decided to concentrate on two specific students’ reading abilities for my inquiry. Student A appeared fluent, yet often misunderstood the meanings and morals behind books she read. When I asked her questions about the plot and characters she often needed to look at the pictures to be able to answer the question. Whereas this student was seemingly fluent, she read at a good pace with proper tone and pauses, yet she lacked comprehension skills significantly. Note Student A’s sample work from the beginning of the year. The teacher comment reads, “No, you did not read carefully”. (See Appendix 1) On the other hand, Student B reads somewhat fluently. He reads the words on the page quickly but often slurs his speech, changes words such as “it’s” to “is”, and completely ignores words such as “the” or “of”. He, too, displayed extreme difficulty both retelling the story and answering comprehension questions. (See Appendix 2)

Finally, it is imperative to understand how reading curriculum and instruction is designed in the State College Area School District. State College uses a thematic integrated language arts-social studies curriculum. All thematic units are supported by various texts such as novels, folktales, biographies, etc. Teachers use these books to both teach social studies concepts and practice reading skills simultaneously. Because Student A and Student B lack comprehension skills, they often miss an enormous amount of social studies content. It is students like these who often slip through the cracks, as they appear fluent readers; but with a deeper look, these students are struggling to comprehend.
Wonderings and Questions

Main Wondering:

My inquiry question focuses on how to encourage struggling readers to read for meaning. I am seeking to discover strategies for both the students and myself to have meaningful reading discussions with students who often “forget” what happens in the story. From February-April 2010, I worked with a small group of students, specifically Student A and Student B, on being accountable and thoughtful readers through various strategies.

*How can I encourage struggling readers to read for meaning?*

Sub-Wonderings:

- How can I encourage struggling readers to willingly participate in reading discussions?
- How can I encourage meaningful responses in reading journals?
- Are third graders capable of creating meaningful questions during reading instruction?
- How can I hold readers accountable while they are reading?
- How does better reading comprehension carry over into other subjects?
- Do at-home reading habits relate to reading habits at school?

Data Collection:

Clear Description of Data Collection:

I collected an assortment of data in order to fully explore various strategies to encourage reading for meaning with struggling readers in my third grade classroom. Strategies included having the student read aloud while I asked questions, keyword sticky notes, keyword bookmarks, and creating their own questions. Data collection was conducted before, during and after the implementation of reading for meaning strategies.
BEFORE

Prior to implementing my inquiry, I took a close look at students’ reading journals from September to February. I noticed an interesting trend in two specific readers, which, in turn, spurred my entire inquiry journey. After observing how these students went about first, reading the assigned pages, and second, answering assigned response questions, I noticed that they never actually read the text. They simply skimmed the words on the page to find the answers to the response questions. When asked other important details from the text these two students had no idea. This is problematic because these students were missing huge components of the curriculum, as they weren’t actually reading instructional texts. (See Appendices 1 and 2)

To further understand the ability of the aforementioned students, I decided to complete a running record on the third grade benchmark level for each student. This assessment allowed me to focus on the tone of voice and appropriate pausing while reading. I was also able to ask comprehension level questions when the students were done reading. Both students raced through the text, slammed the book closed when they were finished reading and let out a big sigh of relief. When I asked them comprehension questions about the text both students first responded with “I don’t know”. Then, when I asked what they remembered from the story, they each skimmed the pages, looked at the pictures, and told me what they saw in the pictures. It is important to note that both of these readers appear fluent when asked to read aloud either one-on-one or in a group setting.

I also conducted an “At-Home Reading Habit” survey for my reading group. My intention for this survey was to gauge which students enjoy reading at home. I wanted to know how often they read outside of school, how long they read for, what kinds of books they liked, who their favorite author was and if they read with their parents. Student A said she reads at
home most days for twenty minutes without her parents. Her favorite books are chapter books and her favorite author is Julia Devillers and Jennifer Roy. Student B said he never reads at home, his favorite author is Tedd Arnold and that he did not know if his parents like reading. *(See Appendix 5)*

**DURING**

In order to figure out which strategies would encourage these readers to think while they were reading, I looked to popular reading comprehension books. According to the Instructional Support Teacher at Gray’s Woods Elementary, the best book for reading comprehension strategies is *Guided Comprehension in the Primary Grades* by Maureen McLaughlin. I began my quest for the perfect strategies in that book and then branched out to the State College Area School District Language Arts Curriculum (LAC) for more ideas.

Under the “Previewing” tab in the LAC, I decided to first try questioning strategies with Student A and Student B. The skill I was most concerned about with Student A was stopping to think about the words as she reads. She seemed to fly through the words during the running records. Each day, before she began the assigned reading, I asked her a few questions about what she read the previous day. I asked her to tell me about the main characters, the plot and the important events of the story. Student A responded well to my questioning. Both her oral and written responses improved dramatically with this questioning strategy. *(Compare Appendix 1 to 6)*

I observed Student B closely during the first few days of my inquiry. I noticed him looking at the response questions before he began to read and then I watched him race through the chapter looking for words he saw in the question and form a convoluted written response in
his reading journal. I quickly discovered that I needed a way to hold this student accountable for his reading. When given freedom to read on his own, this student did the bare minimum.

My first intervention for this student was to sit and listen to him read the entirety of the assigned reading. Every few paragraphs I asked him a question or two about what he just read. He was capable of answering these questions. His responses became more elaborate and meaningful with this questioning strategy. *(See Appendix 7)* This strategy quickly took too much instructional time away from other students, so I tried a note taking system in hopes of holding Student B accountable while he read.

The first accountability system I tried was a bookmark. On the bookmark students were to record one interesting part of the chapter, one part that made them wonder, one connection to their own life, and any words that the reader could not figure out. *(See Appendix 8)* This strategy worked the first day I tried using it, but thereafter Student B began complaining about how he hated reading group again. I knew that I needed to try something different because I was worried I would never see progress if I was making this student do something he thought was “busy work”.

The second note taking system I tried I called the “Keyword Sticky Note System”. This strategy required students to write one main event from each page of the story on a sticky note. Student B did an outstanding job jotting down keywords on the sticky notes. *(See Appendix 9)* Not only was his note taking exceptional, he also was more excited about participating during the reading discussion. Another wonderful aspect of this strategy was how Student B’s responses matured in both his reading journal and in reading discussions. *(See Appendix 13)* The downfall to this strategy was some students wrote so much down on the sticky notes that it took them three times as long to read the allotted amount. I found myself constantly reminding students to just jot
down a few notes about the event, not to copy sentences or phrases from the story. I decided to try a different system of note taking after that.

I called the next system a “Keyword Bookmark”. Essentially, this strategy was the same as the sticky notes but it was less hassle for me to put the sticky notes in all of the books, and to collect the sticky notes. (See Appendix 11) Finally, Student A and Student B were reading all of the words on all of the pages and were responding more meaningfully in both discussion groups and reading journals. After using this strategy for a few days, I asked Student B his opinion of the strategy. He replied, “I like the bookmark strategy because it helped me write down my thinking”. His response was music to my ears! Not only was I pleased that this student was actually reading the book thoroughly, I was thrilled that he could admit to enjoying a strategy when in the beginning of the year he claimed to detest anything reading related.

After attending the Literacy Trainings sometime in March, hosted by two Curriculum Support Teachers from the State College Area School district, I wondered if my reading group might find more meaning if they created their own reading response questions. That way students would point out what was meaningful in the chapter, rather than the teacher always pointing out what was meaningful. I created a simple rubric for the children to follow. (See Appendix 14) Student A did this very well; however, Student B tried to do the bare minimum at first. With a push, Student B was able to create a meaningful question. The motivating factor with this strategy was that students were to exchange their question with a partner. Student B’s whole demeanor changed for the better when I mentioned that he could exchange with one of his good friends. After trying this strategy a few times, I asked both Student A and Student B if they enjoyed reading better when using this strategy. They both excitedly replied, “Yes!” Key phrases to indicate their enjoyment include: “I think it made me a better reader because we could all
express our own thinking and we don’t have to talk about the same questions during
discussions.” Another student said, “It was fun not having the same questions and it was
interesting to think about harder questions”. Not only did I wonder about their enjoyment of the
strategies, I wanted to know if this was more challenging to readers. Student A specifically
explained that, “This strategy is the right pace for me because I can keep up and think at the
same time.” Student B explained that he liked this strategy most because, “he could work with
his friends.”

AFTER

After implementing the questioning and accountability strategies with my readers, I
wondered how Student A and Student B would comprehend a book on the third grade
benchmark reading level. Student A’s comprehension improved as compared to the beginning of
my inquiry. I also noticed a huge leap in confidence; this change could also be attributed to the
comfort level reached after working closely with a student for a prolonged period of time.
Compared to the first running record, Student A demonstrated a more confident attitude about
reading. She was able to explain her thinking clearly as I asked her comprehension level
questions, she was also able to demonstrate inference! For example, when I asked, “What does
instinct mean to you?” she replied, “Instincts are just what we do and we are born with them.”
She went on to explain that babies are born knowing to cry when they need something. When I
asked why instincts are important she turned her focus to dogs and said, “Dogs are used to packs
and they pick a leader and have to survive together and obey the leader, and that is their instinct.”
Clearly, Student A was reading for meaning as she was able to reply meaningfully to my
questioning.
Student B also demonstrated his ability to read for meaning as he read the same book as Student A. In January, during the first data collection, Student B answered mostly with, “I don’t know.” In April his answers were much more elaborate and meaningful. When I asked, “What does instinct mean?” he answered, “It means what comes to you, you can’t help it. It’s like when a dog barks because it’s protecting its pack.” Never did it say in the story that a dog barked because it was protecting its pack, Student B inferred that information, which is completely correct. As the evident shows, Student B read more for meaning after my strategies were implemented.

Finally, the difference between the responses in the beginning of my inquiry to the responses towards the end proved dramatic. In the beginning of this process I was spending the majority of the reading time trying to hold my readers accountable. Near the end my inquiry I was impressed with the thoughts and responses in reading journals. (See Appendices 13 and 15)

Data Analysis

When collecting the data for this inquiry, I carefully planned and collected items that I felt would help me answer my main wondering and sub-questions. In the very beginning, I was mainly interested in answering the question, “How can I better reading comprehension in my classroom?” I thought I might try starting with questioning strategies, move to visualization and finally, I wanted to end with connections strategies. However, after speaking with experts in the field, I learned that the aforementioned skills are ones that need weeks upon weeks of practice each. Understanding my time limit, I narrowed my inquiry to questioning strategies.

With a focus on questioning strategies my first attempt at encouraging my struggling readers to read for meaning was primarily just conversations before and after reading time. I
modeled how I read and ask questions of the text at the same time. I also discussed the idea of making predictions and wonderings. Students were more aware of what they read when guided to question, predict and wonder while they read as measured by their reading journals.

In my attempt at making my readers more accountable during reading, I began to implement a note taking system. This truly helped build a better reading discussion and better responses in reading journals. (*See Appendices 15 and 16*) Throughout my inquiry process, the note-taking system morphed, but still served the same purpose. Both Student A and Student B became more confident and eager participants in reading discussions.

When I got to the point where all of my readers were reading for meaning, at least better than they were in the beginning of my inquiry process, I wanted to see if they could read for meaning and show me that they were reading for meaning by creating meaningful questions. Creating questions took place of the typical reading response questions that I created. Not only did students provide more meaningful responses in their journals, they were also excited to share their questions and their responses to the questions during reading discussions. (*See Appendix 12*)

**Explanation of Findings**

After analyzing my data through the process outlined above, I noticed a few patterns and trends regarding the effectiveness of reading for meaning strategies with two struggling readers.

**Claim 1: Students read for meaning more when they are given a structured note system that tracks their thinking during reading.**

My main wondering throughout this inquiry was how I could encourage children to read for meaning. I collected ample evidence to support the fact that giving students a structured note taking system to record thoughts about main ideas and important details, students better
understand what they are reading as recorded in their reading response journals. It was interesting to try an oral system, a structured questioning bookmark, and a more open-ended bookmark and gauge how well each worked. The oral system worked well as a one-on-one situation; however, it took too much time away from my other students. The structured bookmark proved to be too cumbersome at times because students began to write multiple sentences on the bookmark, which slowed their reading dramatically. The best note taking system that I created was the “Keyword Bookmark” where the students were required to write down a main thought from each page they read. This proved to be an effective strategy for making sure children were reading for meaning, and for recording thoughts during reading. Both reading discussions and reading response journals improved with these note-taking systems in place. (See Appendices)

Claim 2: Students are more likely to participate meaningfully in reading discussions if they have a note-taking strategy to reference and build upon.

In thinking beyond Student A and Student B, I noticed a trend in the reading discussions for all students in my concentrated reading group. When asked comprehension level questions without the note taking systems, many times students would struggle to answer questions clearly and competently. Students were less eager to voice opinions about the text. However, when they took notes while they read, students seemed more engaged and ready to participate in discussions. The note systems gave these students a solid place to start. Many times we would have to stop our reading lesson due to a time constraint. The note systems made it more simple and manageable to pick up where we left off from the last lesson. The strategies introduced during my inquiry process encouraged meaningful participation by giving the students a solid
framework to start from, mapping their thinking and aiding confidence in both written and oral responses. *(See Appendices 17 and 18)*

**Claim 3: Capable readers are able to create meaningful reading response questions.**

In my efforts to explore how to encourage students to think while reading, I wondered if students could find their own meaning by creating their own questions. These questions were supposed to be based off something that made them wonder or question the text. Student work samples prove that most readers are capable of coming up with meaningful response questions. Student A had no difficulty creating a question of her own when given a detailed rubric. *(See Appendix 14)* At first, she was overwhelmed with a new task but when I explained that she was totally capable of completing the task, she did an excellent job. *(See Appendix 12)* Student B was excited at the prospect of doing something different in our reading group. The first few attempts at a meaningful question needed a little more work, based on the rubric, but Student B proved that he could write meaningful questions when he asked, “Who does William Penn remind you of?” His response was, “William Penn reminds me of Martin Luther King Jr. because he fought with his words just like William Penn.”

**Claim 4: Reading aloud assists reading comprehension across subjects.**

*(This idea is warranted based on limited evidence that I hope to keep exploring.)* I noticed that Student B scored poorly on math assessments containing multiple-choice questions. I wondered if this had something to do with his lack of thinking when he reads. Student B is capable of reading word-for-word, yet often claims he “doesn’t know” what the text means. *(This has always seemed like a lack of motivation with math tests).* However, when I sat down with Student B, both during regular reading lessons (as explained above) and during math assessments, Student B demonstrated understanding after reading the question and each answer
option aloud. He scored at an “advanced” level when he read each question aloud to me, and at a “below basic” level when he did not. I realize that reading aloud might not be the reason he scored higher, but I believe it contributed.

**Reflections and Implications for Future Practice**

In my own classroom, I hope to differentiate instruction so that all learners receive ample reading strategy instruction. While I realize that twenty-four students is totally demanding and it’s quite difficult to run three different reading groups, I believe that some students get lost in the midst of such a large group. Not only will I differentiate by ability, I will also divvy my instructional time fairly amongst the whole class. I know now that even though a reader can read words quickly and accurately, it does not mean that they necessarily comprehend what they read. In my own classroom I plan to set up a reading strategy basket where students can go to find just the right strategy for them. By modeling strategies and then allowing students to find a strategy that works for them, I believe that I can differentiate instruction and give students some choice, in hopes of spread reading enjoyment throughout my classroom. Moreover, beyond enjoying reading in my classroom, I hope to instill the love of reading in each student with whom I work.

From this inquiry I found myself wondering more about many things. I wonder how teachers and parents can spark an interest for non-readers. I also wonder what can be done to catch readers who are struggling to comprehend in the earlier grades. When thinking about dividing children into reading groups, I wonder what the optimal group is for each reader? Will children achieve more when they are grouped into common interest versus grouped by ability? If students are more interested in the text based on the subject, will they naturally read more for meaning? Finally, I wonder how I can be the best reading teacher for each student in my
classroom. I am prepared to wonder this for my entire career, as I realize this is an enormous question.
Appendix

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8. Student B, First Bookmark Strategy
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11. Student A, Keyword Bookmark
12. Student A and Student B, Question Exchange
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15. Student A, Student Sample Progress
16. Student A, Student Sample Progress
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Charlie Young Bear

Why Charlie Young Bear had trouble sleeping was his bed because he had a lump in his bed and he thought something was under his bed. I think the money came and Charlie Young Bear got a bike and his mom got a stove and his father got his tools.

Why Charlie Young Bear had trouble sleeping is because he thought he should have more offering.
2. Student B, Before Student Work

9-28-09

Student B, Before Student Work

Charlie Young, Beau

#1 One thing about Charlie, he has black button eyes.
Another is that he was very kind.

#2 9-28-09

Another, Charlie wants a new bike.
Another, Charlie has lots of friends.

#3 9-30-09

I would like to have Charlie as a friend because I think he is very kind.

#3 Charlie needed money for his dream. His dream was a new bicycle.
3. Student B, Before Student Work Sample

I don't think you understand the saying.

If you think you should get it you should but if you don't you don't. The sound on the great spirit is thunder.

10-6-00

#1 Charlie had a hard time sleeping because he might not get a new bike.

#2 I think Charlie is going to get a new bike.

#1 9-12-09 He rose off to the woods because he said thank you to the great spirit.

#2 Charlie new the great
4. Student B, Before Student Work Sample

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The title is called The Gift of the Sacred Dog.

10-15-09

The Sacred dog was created because the boy went on the hills and prayed. The Spirit sent horses. Another reason is that they were starving of hunger and thirst. The Sacred dog would help them get buffalo to eat with stolen horses. Dogs were horses.

10-22-09

The Legend of The Indian Paintbrush

1. The main character was little Copper. Also, the gods. The setting is very dry. It is in the plains. It also has hills. His Indian tribe lives in tipi. The problem was they needed me.
5. Student A and Student B, At Home Reading Survey

Tell me about your reading habits at home 😊 Name:

How often do you read at home?
- Everyday
- Most Days
- Almost never

When you do read, how long are you reading? (Hour, half hour, 20 minutes...)
NEVER

What kinds of books do you read at home?
NONE

Who are your favorite authors?
TEDDY RUDOLPH

Do you read with your parents?
No

Do your parents like to read?
Yes 😊

Tell me about your reading habits at home 😊 Name:

How often do you read at home?
- Everyday
- Most Days
- Almost never

When you do read, how long are you reading? (Hour, half hour, 20 minutes...)
20

What kinds of books do you read at home?
CHAPTER

Who are your favorite authors?
Julia Deavers

Do you read with your parents?
No

Do your parents like to read?
Yes 😊
6. Student A, Self-Questioning strategy

The Sword IN THE TREE

Shan-Sham is very kind and always tries to help.

Nappus - Nappus can't hear or speak but he can read lips. I didn't really get a good feel about Nappus.

I think Uncle Lionel is mean because Lady Marian says that Uncle Lionel was never a kind or gentle knight. Also, he was never as brave as Shan's father. Another way he is mean is he asked Shan why he was crying and called Shan a dog.

My prediction is Uncle Lionel will be mean to Shan and at least say I am sorry.
#1 Lord Weldon was riding in the woods and got stuck in quick sand.

#2 It does not make sense to me because was in the woods and quick sand is not in the woods.

#3 I wonder what will happen to Lord Weldon.

2-15-10

2-17-10

What did he do the second in it's hole then hit it hard in the oak tree because, Uncle Lionel hit it and it was his fault.

#1 "You're going to be talked about.

#2 Uncle Lionel set the trap."
Date: 3-18-10

One interesting thing: Shaz rode off a horse with Sir Gareth until Magnus was riding on his donkey.

One thing that makes you wonder: What will happen in Chapter 13?
26

9. Student B, Keyword Sticky Note Strategy

Key Word Strategy for
Lost March 24-26, 20

loves being outside
name Sandra loved
in fresh mountains

five hours of
day time left

loved in new
show now won could
hike

racket safety gear,
compass, map

didn't know which
way to go

she was close
to the mountains
to careful to
use compass or map

Santra felt
quiet and small
in the forest
duged small cave
after hours
no one heard from her / sent out search / they

tried to stay warm

toes fingers were / tingling / no wound / no cancer

looking for her / helicopter / sandra look for people

walked for two hours / fell down / hill leg hurt broke / hear leg / hear

fixed sandra

Your thoughts on this strategies: *help? *made you a better reader? Did helped me be a better reader because it helped me write down thinking.
11. Student A, Keyword Bookmark

PG 1: England.
He was one of the first children from his Mom's stomach. William attended Chigwell Academy when 11 yrs. old. He went to law school.

PG 4: The word Quacker means a group of people that are religious. Like they all gather together and talk about things.

PG 16: Penn asked King Charles for money so he could have a colony for the Quakers.

PG 18: Penn naming the colony for the Quakers caused Pennsylvania.

PG 19: Penn wrote the frame of government which included 40 laws.
12. Student A and Student B, Question Exchange

The Great Question Exchange

Your job today is to read the next two chapters and take notes using the sticky note system from yesterday. When you are finished, write TWO thoughtful and meaningful questions about what you read below. Answer your questions in your journal. Then, exchange questions with your partner and answer the two questions they asked. When both of you are finished, see Miss Conner.

My Meaningful Questions:

1. How did Sandra get into the tunnel and why?

2. What did Sandra fear most?

The Great Question Exchange

Your job today is to read the next two chapters and take notes using the sticky note system from yesterday. When you are finished, write TWO thoughtful and meaningful questions about what you read below. Answer your questions in your journal. Then, exchange questions with your partner and answer the two questions they asked. When both of you are finished, see Miss Conner.

My Meaningful Questions:

1. What did Sandra dig? Why?

2. What did Sandra feel in the beginning of the forest and the middle of the forest?
13. Student B, Student Work Progress

There are many important events. One event was in 1776. The first event you need to be the capital of Pennsylvania. My last event is that Pennsylvania have freedom. As you can see, there are many important events.

14. Question Exchange Rubric

A Meaningful Question...
- Requires more than a one word answer
- Requires thought beyond the text
- Comes from your own brain
4-6-18

In 1680 William Penn asked King Charles II for money so he could have a colony for the Quakers. Penn named the colony for the Quakers and he called it Pennsylvania. He wrote the frame of the government, which included fourty laws. In 1682 Penn left his wife and his child ren in England and he left for North America. There are interesting facts about William Penn in chapter three.
William Penn

4-5-10

The Quakers are a religious group of people who believe in God. They believe in the Bible and live their lives according to its teachings. They do not believe in a formal church or a priest to lead them in worship. They believe that everyone has a personal relationship with God and that all people are equal.

During the nine-month stay in prison, Penn learned to write. No cross. No crown. During Penn's life, he wrote his thoughts and experiences down on paper.
17. Student, Opinion of Strategy

What was your favorite book we read and why? (The Sword in the Tree or Lost)

My favorite book was The Sword in the Tree. Because it tells you lots of details and hard words. The reason I like hard words is because they are fun to figure out. And I liked it because the another made good characters.

Do you feel that the strategies (Sticky notes, Exchanging Questions, Predicting and Questioning) we used helped you be a better reader? Which strategy was the most helpful? Why?

What helped me most was the sticky notes and exchanging questioning. Because the sticky notes helped me get my questioning be good on my question so be right or decent. And it helped my gestions be in the book and I don’t make my gestions be true not fiction the sticky notes helped.
Student B, Opinion of Strategies

What was your favorite book we read and why?
(The Sword in the Tree or Lost)

My favorite book we read was The Sword because it wasn't so hard. Also, it was more exciting. My last way was that it wasn't as much thinking.

Do you feel that the strategies (Sticky notes, Exchanging Questions, Predicting and Questioning) we used helped you be a better reader? Which strategy was the most helpful? Why?

It helped me be a better reader because it did not help to go back in the book and read again. I liked giving questions to each other because we did not have to have the same questions. I liked the bookmark because it helped me write down my thinking.
Annotated Bibliography

   
   This is an excellent resource for reading comprehension strategies, furthermore, it’s an excellent resource for the theory behind the strategies as well. For example, the text discusses why reading for meaning is important, it includes lessons on comprehension, and finally, it includes resources to support instruction in the appendices. I especially appreciate the detail that the strategy lesson list includes in the table of contents. Another amazing component of this text are the “Classroom Portrait” sections, where an entire lesson is explained and coupled with a strategy. This is a great resource for my inquiry as the organization of the strategies and lessons will apply directly to my teaching.

   
   This is a great resource for reading comprehension strategies. The basis of this resource is that students find meaning when they reflect and retell thoughtfully. The format of the book is excellent; the chapters include “Conversations”, “Oral Retelling”, “Written Reflections”, “Informational Text”, and “Enhancing Understanding”. For a young teacher, I feel that this is an exceptional resource for ideas to enhance reading lessons. Moreover, the black-lines included in the book are an amazing resource. I found some surveys about reading habits that will be especially helpful for my inquiry project. What’s most helpful about this book are the ideas for enhancing lessons, there is less theory about reading instruction in this resource compared to others.

   
   This article was insightful for me because it discussed why certain children have a sincerely tough time learning to read. More importantly, it discussed one factor that poverty and lack of resources doesn’t answer. That factor is lack of phonetic awareness and ability. This article is just a scratch on the surface, but it opened my eyes to a new aspect of reading that I don’t think about much. Because most of the students in my classroom are fluent readers, but lack comprehension, I did not put a lot of effort into looking at phonetics before. This is something to think about for my lowest readers during my inquiry process.

   
   I especially appreciate this book for its chapter titled “Independence through Conferences”. So much of my time in the classroom this year has been sitting with individual students pushing them along to finish reading lessons. Conferences are great opportunities to support students. They provide immediate support for new concepts, and they allow teachers to build upon prior understandings in a way that might not be possible during group instruction. Teachers can focus on a specific teaching point over a span of a few lessons through conferences. Because my lowest readers have trouble vocalizing their thoughts, conferencing is important for the teacher to learn what strategies the student is currently using, and what strategies the student might benefit from working towards. Conferencing is about listening and talking with students about what one notices and what one thinks students can try. Conferencing is especially important for me to think about with my lowest readers during my inquiry.

This book, coupled with the Primary Grade version, is an excellent resource for ideas in comprehension strategies and small-group reading instruction. I’m interested in the idea of “student-facilitated comprehension centers”. McLaughlin promotes the grouping of similar abilities together. Instruction is based on students’ needs, interests, and current strategies. Leveled books are matched depending on ability. Guided Comprehension begins with a review of old strategies, and are then guided with a new strategy. Instruction continues with practice of the new strategy and ends with a reflection from the student as to how well the new strategy worked for them. For example, the teacher might introduce the strategy “making connections”. The students would make predictions and record wonderings, then as they read, they complete a “double-entry journal”.

   This book is an amazing resource for reading comprehension. It is based from the constructivist viewpoint. It is believed that children make sense of their world by building on prior knowledge. This encourages to focus on big ideas and see multiple perspectives. This book is a great resource for my inquiry because it introduced me to the ideas of “balanced literacy”, guided comprehension, and comprehension strategies. These strategies include: previewing, self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, knowing how words work, monitoring, summarizing, and evaluation. McLaughlin discusses just how important reading is in a classroom, and writes that teaching and reviewing comprehension strategies is vital to fostering good readers.

   This article emphasized the importance of comprehension instruction in the primary grades, as stated in the title. The most helpful suggestion I took from this article is to provide explicit instruction of comprehension strategies. That way, children understand expectations and are more focused during lessons and reading. In one study, the authors found that “groups taught to attend to key aspects of stories outperformed students who engaged only in reading and discussing the stories on all measures employed”. This resource is helpful to reaffirm that teaching strategies is important in reading instruction, which I feel is currently lacking in my classroom.

   Sibberson and Szymusiak explain that children in the intermediate grades believe that they are great readers if they read every word quickly. Intermediate students don’t realize that all readers get stuck sometimes. Goals for these students are to make connections with prior knowledge, ask questions, visualize, infer, find big ideas, synthesize information, and monitor, correct, and clarify their understanding as they read. Students in the upper grades explain, “Getting stuck means getting to a word they don’t know”. (Pp. 52) However, getting stuck not only means coming to an unknown word, it likely means comprehension is lacking. This text opened my eyes to the idea of setting reading goals and coming to terms with the fact that ALL readers struggle sometimes. It is clear that fluency doesn’t necessarily correlate with comprehension. In the older grades, students must be aware that reading for meaning is an important skill. It is important for teacher’s to facilitate reading discussions, which include topics such as student growth as a reader and the fact that getting “stuck” is okay!

Instead of listing comprehension strategies, Taberski focuses on practical, and informal reading comprehension assessments. Guidelines provided in *On Solid Ground* for children who don’t understand what he/she is reading is evident when the child retells the story. If the child starts with many details, he/she might have only understood a short part of the story, or thought that the teacher is asking for specific details. He/she relies heavily on pictures to retell what *happened*. The child might make no connections to self or other books, he/she might rely on teacher prompts, or finally, the student might give no examples at all and tell a very vague retell. This practical and informal assessment will be great for me to use in my inquiry research because it is a comfortable conversation between my student and I, and the student will not feel as if they are being tested as they might through a more formal assessment.


The “LAC” is an amazing resource designed by the State College Area School District. This resource is amazing because it contains an enormous amount of information. I found standards, activities, organizational strategies, workshops, and reading strategies. As a beginning teacher, this resource is invaluable as it is layered with numerous ideas for making reading more exciting and more meaningful. This resource is excellent for my inquiry as it is completely built into the current curriculum.