

1. Engaging students in reciprocal teaching

Summary: Many teachers use some variation of reciprocal teaching – having students predict, clarify, question and summarize – when teaching reading comprehension, but the strategies to guide students to use these skills are often haphazard. In an article for *The Reading Teacher*, University of Southern Mississippi instructor Kelley Stricklin goes over best practices for reciprocal teaching.

Practical Applications

Stricklin suggests that it's important to introduce the “fab four” comprehension strategies of prediction, clarification, questioning and summarization in a way that students will remember. A strategy she pulls out is assigning ‘characters’ to each of the skills, for instance:

- The teacher acts out (or uses puppets to act out) “Paula the Predictor”; Clarence the Clarifier”; “Quinn the Questioner”; “Sammy the Summarizer”
- After introducing the characters, have students practice with specific jobs in groups

The next part of helping students gain facility with these skills is to provide them with many visuals and hands-on tools. Stricklin spends the majority of the article providing concrete examples, including:

- Charts split into the four categories
- Bookmarks that the students create showing each of the four strategies
- Paper plate “spinners” quartered into the strategies
- Props – for instance, plastic magnifying glasses to help students remember to ask clarifying questions about words
- Sticky notes that can be used in a variety of ways, including having students jot down predictions before the story starts or writing down unfamiliar words

The last important aspect of reciprocal teaching is giving students an opportunity to bring it all together and “document” what they learned. This can be done through activities like:

- A “Four Door Chart” in which students “fold both sides of a piece of construction paper towards the middle so they have a double door,” then “cut a line across the middle of both doors to create four doors.” Students then label each door with one of the strategies and record the completed work in that area.

Conclusion and Citation

Helping students to remember and become comfortable with key comprehension strategies through reciprocal teaching – putting students in the driver’s seat of their learning, in other words – requires creative efforts that will cement students’ knowledge and skills.

Stricklin, K. “Hands-on Reciprocal Teaching: A Comprehension Technique.” *The Reading Teacher*, 64.8 (2011), pp. 620-625. <http://tinyurl.com/4yh6r3w> (subscription only).