

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 631

CS 012 730

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TITLE 43 Ways To Help Students Become Better Readers and Writers.
INSTITUTION Mississippi State Dept. of Education, Jackson.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Improvement; Reading Material Selection; Reading Processes; *Reading Strategies; Reading Writing Relationship; *Student Improvement; Teacher Behavior; Teacher Student Relationship; *Writing Improvement; Writing Processes; *Writing Strategies
IDENTIFIERS Writing Contexts

ABSTRACT

This guide briefly discusses reading and writing, and then presents 43 strategies for becoming better readers and writers. The guide discusses writing and reading as processes, and lists questions that writers ask and that readers ask. Some of the 43 ways to help students listed in the brochure are: read aloud to students; practice journal writing; have students make predictions about the story; have students read and write for a variety of purposes; give genuine praise for improvements in reading and writing; provide time for reading; give students plenty of opportunity to write and read a variety of forms; model reading and writing; encourage students to edit and reflect on what they have written; provide students with adequate time to prepare and practice if they are to read literature or their writing aloud to the class; allow students to make some choices about what they read and write; and link reading and writing to what is being taught in class. (RS)

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43 Ways to Help Students Become Better Readers and Writers

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43 Ways to Help Students Become Better Readers and Writers

Just a word about writing and reading

When we write, we turn ideas over in our mind and try to find the best combination of words to convey these ideas. The ideas are recorded in words, which we arrange to have a particular effect on a reader. Writing is more than handwriting instruction, mere copying sentences, filling in the blanks, or completing questions with a few sentences.

In reading, we take our previous experiences and knowledge and use them as a frame of reference through which we come to understand the ideas conveyed with the written word. We interpret the writer's words in terms of our own experience and knowledge. We weave together our knowledge and experience with the writer's words and reach a new understanding. Reading is active rather than passive. Reading is more than sounding out words

or sentences aloud. It's more than the analysis of the bits and pieces of letters.

Writing and reading are natural partners. Writers write to be read and readers read what writers have written. Readers become writers when they write about what they've read. Writers become readers as they read or edit what they have written.

Writing and reading as processes

Reading and writing are processes, not just products. In fact, writers and readers follow similar thought processes. Before getting started, writers and readers plan and predict. While reading or writing and even afterwards, writers and readers adjust their previous ideas and discover new ones. The questions they ask, whether consciously or unconsciously, are very much alike.

WRITERS ASK

- What will I write?
- What will it be like?
- How will I use my experiences as I write?
- What do I discover when I write?
- Where do the words I'm writing lead me?
- What do I experience when I write?
- How is this different from what I expected?
- What am I trying to say, and would someone else agree or disagree?
- How do the words affect a reader or me?
- What would a reader understand or not understand? What could be improved?
- How will I use the words when I interact with others?

READERS ASK

- What will I read?
- What will it be like?
- How will I use my experiences as I read?
- What do I discover when I read?
- Where do the words I'm reading lead me?
- What do I experience when I read?
- How is this different from what I expected?
- What is the author trying to tell me, and do I agree or disagree?
- How did the words affect me?
- What did I understand or not understand? What could be improved?
- How will I use the words when I interact with others?

Writers and readers plan and predict.

Writers and readers discover meaning.

Writers and readers revise and re-shape meaning to reach a new understanding.

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Brochure endorsed by the Mississippi Council of Teachers of English and the Mississippi Reading Association.

43 Ways to Help Students Become Better Readers and Writers

- Give students good literature to read.
- Read aloud to students.
- Provide time for students to read silently in class.
- Look for what a student's writing reveals about his or her understanding of language and the world.
- Before students read, talk about their experiences that relate to what they will read.
- Encourage students to write journal entries or to write about other personal experiences that have some connection with what they have read or are about to read.
- Use student editing groups for revising their writing.
- Share and celebrate students' writing through reading it aloud, posting it, or publishing it.
- Avoid worksheets, exercises, and tests that are fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and short answer.
- Have students keep a list of what they have read.
- Ask students to make predictions about the story based on illustrations or the title.
- Connect students' experiences to their reading, both before and after reading.
- Ask questions about literature that help students draw conclusions, identify conflict in a story and its resolution, determine the author's meaning and purpose for writing, and understand cause and effect, character motivation, and sequence of events.
- Challenge students to read and write a variety of kinds of writing, such as stories, reports, advertisements, directions, and news.
- Have students read and write for a variety of purposes, such as for information, for enjoyment, and to perform a task.
- Use art, drama, dance, and demonstration in the classroom. Then have students write and read about their experience.
- Talk about a topic, ask questions, and brainstorm with students to find out what they already know, to arouse their curiosity, and to involve them in learning.

- Use projects that join reading and writing with experiments, explorations, planning, or problem solving to show that reading and writing are natural parts of these real-world activities.

- Use reading and writing as part of the learning experience and for discovery, not just for evaluation purposes.

- Give genuine praise for improvements in reading and writing.

- Make literature the center of classroom content and activities, and relate other learning to the literature.

- Give opportunities for students to reflect on what they've read or written. Ask them to choose which pieces they like best and why, which ones were challenging and why, and how they've changed as readers and writers.

- Provide students with adequate time to prepare and practice if they are to read literature or their writing aloud to the class.

- Create a positive, supportive classroom that allows and rewards students for taking intellectual risks as they develop their reading and writing abilities. Encourage students in their attempts.

- Provide time for reading.

- Talk with students about the process writers go through in producing a finished piece of writing. Provide time for students to brainstorm, plan, write first drafts, edit, proofread, and rewrite.

- Allow students to make some choices about what they read and write.

- Encourage students to respond to what they have read by retelling the story, discussing it, acting it out, role-playing, debating it, using movement and illustration, and writing about it.

- Provide time for students to talk and listen in productive ways about what they are writing or reading.

- Form groups of three to four students or pair them to read, discuss, or respond to a story or something they've written.

- Give plenty of opportunity for students to write and read a variety of forms (letters, essays, stories, journals) for a variety of purposes (to inform, persuade, describe, entertain)

for a variety of audiences (students, teachers, children, strangers, businesses).

- Activate students' prior knowledge before reading and writing. Have them make predictions about what they will read or write and have them develop questions about the work.

- Emphasize and encourage the quality of ideas and details of a written piece. In later drafts punctuation, spelling, and grammatical correctness can be addressed through editing and proofreading.

- Use *how*, *why*, *what if*, and *what else* questions to extend students' understanding of what they have read or are writing.

- Model reading and writing. During periods of silent sustained reading, read while students do. Bring your drafts of writing to show the messy art of writing, thinking, and rewriting.

- Have students read stories or their own writing to other students and to adults.

- Encourage students to edit and reflect on what they've written by asking if their work is their best or if they have more to say.

- Help students develop details in their writing by encouraging them to anticipate what a reader would want to know about their topic. Students can list questions a reader would ask, and they can predict what a reader knows or doesn't know about the topic.

- Point out how the acts of writing and reading can lead to discovery—the discovery of new ideas and the discovery of self. Ask students what surprises, disappointments, problems, and insights they have encountered through writing and reading.

- Make students feel comfortable, physically and emotionally, while reading and writing.

- Point out the processes and strategies readers use, consciously or unconsciously, such as making predictions, identifying important information, summarizing, developing questions, and monitoring reading by stopping, rereading, and modifying one's understanding.

- Talk about stories you're reading and writing.

- Link reading and writing to whatever else you're doing in class.



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