IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH APPLICATION
AND TRANSFER OF READING STRATEGIES

Nicole Pesa
Sarah Somers

A Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & Pearson Achievement Solutions

Chicago, Illinois

May 2007

Abstract

This study describes a program designed to improve reading comprehension through the selection, application, and transfer of appropriate reading strategies with both fictional and informational texts. The targeted population consisted of seventh and eighth grade middle school students in a middle-class community in the western suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. The status of the family incomes ranged from low to middle levels. Evidence of the existence of the problem included: student, parent, and teacher surveys, below grade-level scores on the Holt Rinehart Winston Diagnostic Assessment, and failure to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) state assessment goals.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students showed a needed improvement in reading comprehension related to the lack of application of reading strategies. Assessments and teams of teachers reported student difficulty in transfer of reading strategies to content area subjects. This may have been due to the absence of explicit instruction for reading strategies, in addition to unwillingness among teachers to work collaboratively in creating opportunities to use the reading strategies across curriculums.

A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature, combined with an analysis of the settings of the problem, resulted in a movement to administer explicit instruction of reading strategies to help students select and apply the proper reading strategies while reading fictional and informational texts. Ultimately, the design of this study was to establish ease with reading comprehension and the transfer of life-long reading skills.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in the awareness and application of reading comprehension strategies on the post-study assessments; however, observations from each teacher researcher indicated students struggle to recall and consistently apply reading comprehension strategies independently. Furthermore, content area teachers/colleagues confirmed the students' inability to transfer and apply the reading strategies to their curriculum.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The students of the targeted seventh and eighth grade language arts classrooms exhibited a lack of ability to select and apply appropriate reading strategies to both fictional and informational text. Evidence of the existence of the problem included: student, parent, and teacher surveys, below grade-level scores on the Holt Rinehart Winston Diagnostic Assessment, and failure to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) state assessment goals.

Research Site

The site for this research was a middle school located in the western suburbs of Chicago. The site had a student population of 830 students. The racial/ethnic background of the students consisted of the following: 64.4% Caucasian, 5.6% African-American, 11.9% Hispanic, 17.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .6% Native American. Other district information included the following: 8.0% of the students were classified low-income rate. These were students from families receiving public aide; living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children; supported in foster homes with public funds; or eligible to receive free or reduced-priced lunches. The site reported a mobility rate of 5.9%. The mobility rate was determined by the number of times students enrolled in or left a school during the school year. The student attendance rate was 95.8%. Limited English Proficient students included those students who were eligible for transitional bilingual programs. Limited English Proficiency students made up 1.6% of the enrollment. In comparison with state averages, the site's Limited English Proficient

and mobility rates were below the state's average; however, the site's attendance rate was above the state average (Illinois School Report Card 2005).

The school was comprised of 102 staff members, 68 of which were certified and 34 uncertified (including secretaries, classroom aides, and custodial staff). Of the certified staff, ten were male and 58 were female. The 11 sixth grade instructors had unique teaching assignments, in that each staff member was responsible for teaching at least two content areas. Comparatively, seventh and eighth grade teachers focused on instruction in one content area. Both the seventh and eighth grade staff members were divided between two instructional teams per grade level that consisted of: four language arts teachers, two mathematics teachers, two social studies teachers, two science teachers, and three foreign language teachers. A special education team of ten, facilitated the supplemental programs offered at the site, in addition to their responsibilities as co-teachers. Physical education instructors and related arts teachers made up a separate team of 11, who were responsible for teaching at all three grade levels. The average teaching experience was seven years. Of the certified staff members, 60% had received a master's degree or above.

The two-story facility was primarily organized by grade levels and content areas, flanked by a sixth-grade wing and related arts (Music, Art, Technology, Junior Great Books, Health, and Family-Consumer Sciences) hallway. The school was built in 1988 and a new addition of 20 classrooms was built in 1994. Special Education classrooms were interspersed throughout the seventh and eighth grade hallways. The behavioral disorder classroom was recently relocated to a classroom closer in proximity to the main office, for discipline purposes. The Library Learning Center (LLC) was located on the second floor directly above the main office, related arts area, and gymnasiums. The cafeteria was adjacent to the main entrance/foyer area of the building.

In response to continual struggles to meet ISAT benchmarks, and in addition to poor academic achievement, the site offered several supplemental courses to strengthen student performance in the areas of math and reading. *READ 180* was an intensive reading intervention program designed to meet the needs of students whose reading achievement was below the proficient level. The program addressed individual needs through adaptive and instructional software, high interest literature, and direct instruction in reading skills. The mathematics intervention program was a service that the district provided in each school to give students extra help in mathematics. This program presented the opportunity to work toward filling the gaps that existed in their mathematic knowledge. This was not a replacement program, or a tutoring session; it was supplemental instruction by a certified math teacher. The district's sole guided program was also based at this site. This self-contained program served students whose primary disability was mild to moderate mental retardation and/or autism. Students in this program required services for more than fifty percent of their school day and a functional, life-skills curriculum in all academic areas. In efforts to support the socio-emotional development of the middle school student, the site also offered several support services, which included one-on-one and group counseling provided by two school counselors, the school psychologist, and the school's prevention facilitator.

Although the site serviced three diverse communities, a core group of parents helped to keep the school unified. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Building Leadership Team (BLT), Character Counts Program, and community members involved in the mentoring program helped build morale for both students and teachers. This band of support also equalized the disparity among the economic background of the school's student population. Every three weeks

progress reports were issued. Report cards were sent home each trimester, which was about every twelve weeks.

Classroom A & B

Classroom A of the research site was a seventh grade language arts classroom utilized for teaching literature (reading skills and vocabulary) and language arts (writing, grammar, punctuation, and spelling). Three seventh grade classes rotated through this room in three separate ninety-minute blocks, one of which was an accelerated group of students. The instructional time was equally divided between the literature and language arts curriculum. Similarly, Classroom B facilitated a block of accelerated learners, in addition to two mainstream sections of literature and language arts. This classroom was used to service eighth grade students.

Site's Surrounding Communities

The observed school district serviced three surrounding communities for students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The district was known as an elementary school district, serving students in kindergarten through eighth grade from several surrounding communities. There were roughly 5,000 students enrolled in the district's eight schools. There were six elementary buildings for students in kindergarten through fifth grade and two middle schools, which served students in grades six through eight. Community A consisted of approximately 48,000 residents, of which 79% were Caucasian, 4.1% African American, 9.7% Hispanic, 11.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, .2% Native American, and 5.7% Multi-Racial/Ethnic. The highest level of education ranged from: 24.6% high school graduates, to 24.2% bachelor's degrees, to 8.7% graduate level degrees.   The majority of the housing was owner-occupied, leaving 27.7% of the housing renter-occupied, and the median family income was $75,683. Parallel to this, the

median value of an owner-occupied home was $171,800, while the median gross rent was $798 (Village of Community A., 2000). Within Community A, 60.6% of the total population was married, 13.6% consisted of single-parent families, and 25.8% of the population was single.

Community B, the postal address of the school site, was established as a village in 1839. At the time of the study, the village consisted of approximately 21, 903 residents, of which 82.4% was Caucasian, 2.6% African-American, 5.0% Hispanic, 8.7% Asian/Pacific-Islander, 1.6% Multi-Racial/Ethnic, and 1.5% other race. Of the community's total population, 13.2% were foreign born. The highest levels of education were: 89.2% high school graduates, to 34.4% bachelor's degree, to 10.2% graduate level degrees. The median family income for Community B was $67, 365, while the median home value was $209, 200. This community had an unemployment rate of 3.9% (Village of Community B., 2000). One advantage that attracted people to settle in this community was the town's low real estate tax rate, which was offset by the 1.4 million square foot mall, along with the multitude of surrounding strip malls and restaurants. Within Community B, 57.3% of the total population was married, 18.1% consisted of single-parent families, and the remaining 24.6% of the population was single (Chicago Tribune 2000 Census).

The third community serviced by this school had a population of approximately 38, 278, consisting of: 68.1% Caucasian, 6.1% African-American, 26.7% Hispanic, 12.0% Asian, 3.1% Multi-Racial/Ethnic, and 10.4% other. The level of education ranged from: 78.7% high school graduates, to 20.2% bachelor's degree, to 3.9% graduate level degree, and 4.5% of the population was unemployed. The median family income was $63,990 and the median value of the home was $141, 500. Within Community C, 57.9% of the total population was married,

12.5% consisted of single-parent families, and 29.6% of the population was single. Of the

citizens in this community, 28.5% were foreign born (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

District

According to the Illinois State Report Card of 2005, the district site had a total enrollment

of 4,669 students. The racial/ethnic background of the students in the district consisted of the

following: 65.2% Caucasian, 5.8% African-American, 12.7% Hispanic, 15.8% Asian/Pacific-

Islander, .3% Native American, and .1% Multi-Racial/Ethnic. Other district information

included the following: 5.6% Limited English Proficient, 7% low-income rate, .3% chronic

truancy rate, 9.3% mobility rate, and a 95.6% attendance rate. As a whole, the district was below

state averages in the areas of Limited English Proficient rate, low-income rate, chronic truancy

rate, and mobility rate. Conversely, the district was slightly above the state average attendance

rate.

The district passed its first educational referendum in twenty years in March of 2004 to

support curricular development and implementation of supplemental programs. In the past five

years, all curricular subject areas had been reviewed and revised. New curriculum materials had

been purchased in language arts, math, science, and social science. Due to the community's

dissatisfaction with a referendum struggle at the district's secondary level, mobility rates within

the district were on the rise. This district also experienced a large influx in the number of

students moving in from urban settings.

National Context of the Problem

America continues to become a nation of non-readers as technology advances and the need for exposure to different types of text is reduced. Parallel to the decline in reading, students' ability to comprehend what they read is significantly compromised. As a result, many schools are focusing on the explicit instruction of reading strategies to improve reading comprehension, a method of delivery proven to be effective (Harvey and Goudvis, 2000).

As reported by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) *Reading at Risk* report in July of 2004, Americans, ages 18 and older, read less literature in the last decade in nearly every demographic category (Dawkins, 2005). According to the literary segment of the survey, the definition of fiction includes any novel, short story, play, or collection of poetry, regardless of its literary quality (Azzam, 2005). However, text can be divided into two main genres: fictional and informational. The informational genre includes: newspapers, magazines, websites, book reviews, reference materials, and other expository texts.

Between 1982 and 2002, the NEA found that reading fictional text among adults in the United States declined ten percent, which represents a loss of 20 million potential readers (Azzam, 2005). Although this decline is evident in all age groups, it is most noticeable in the youngest group (18-34 years old) that was surveyed. In 1982, adults ages 18-34 were the most likely group to read literature; however, in 2002 this group was the least likely to read literature. A contributing factor to the decline in reading within the youngest age sector correlates with increased use of a variety of electronic media (Azzam, 2005).

However, rates of reading are on the decline within all age groups, academic, and ethnic backgrounds. Even amongst college graduates reading is decreasing. Only 67 percent of college graduates engaged in fictional reading in 2002, compared with 73 percent in 1982 (Azzam,

2005). The survey also found that "the highest reading rate [is] among White females (61 percent), whereas the lowest is among Hispanic males (18 percent)" (Azzam, 2005). According to Azzam (2005), the population studied that represents the literary reading rate for the U.S. is divided: approximately half U.S. Hispanics and half non-Hispanic Whites. Consequently, the extensive drop in reading rates may in part be due to the dramatic increase in the Hispanic population.

As a result of the rising number of Americans who do not (and/or cannot) read, in conjunction with an isolated approach to teaching reading strategies, comprehension problems persist because students fail to transfer reading techniques to texts outside the language arts classroom. While the current strategy-based reading instruction is a step in the right direction, Rhoder (2002) states, "teaching mindful reading can't be the sole responsibility of the resource room or reading teacher. Promoting active, mindful reading and teaching students to use strategies is every teacher's responsibility" (p. 506). In order for students to retain effective reading skills, they need to apply reading strategies with different genres and across the curriculum. Recent studies find that the "Stand Alone Approach, which centers around isolated, generic strategy training courses, just doesn't work over the long run. Students are taught too many strategies in too little time, with little opportunity for practice and transfer" (Rhoder, 2002, p. 507). With a movement toward an embedded approach, which would provide this necessary practice, students gain comfort with differentiating these reading strategies and apply them subconsciously. However, this presents a problem as some content area educators worry about the loss of instructional time and feel a lack of comfort with the explicit instruction of reading strategies. Furthermore, teaching reading strategies would require more training for teachers of all subjects and more time invested in preparing for class (Rhoder, 2002).

In order for students to be successful in transferring reading strategies to informational and fictional texts, the reading material presented in class needs to be within their instructional level. According to Vygotsky (1978):

> The tasks must be just beyond students' capabilities. [The text] can't be too easy.…Students who read independent-level texts, where they can breeze along on their own, feel no need to be mindful or strategic to understand. However, the tasks can't be too difficult either, because too little success reduces students' self-confidence and motivation…. In other words, texts used for strategy training should be at the students' instructional level. (p. 499)

Additionally, students need to monitor their use of the strategy through metacognitive reflection and assess how well it is improving their comprehension.

At the same time, in order for students to be successful at selecting and transferring reading strategies, teams of teachers must work together and create opportunities to use these skills across curriculum. However, most teachers that come to work on teaching teams do not view teaming as a primary responsibility. Kain argues (1998), "Teaming does not mean getting done with meetings so you can get back to the real world of teaching—it is the world of teaching" (p. 44). Teachers want to spend their time—their limited, valuable time—on matters that influence their work directly. The problem is that in order to help students build connections among subject areas, teachers must reconceptualize their work. "No longer are they 'dispensers of information,' loyal to the subject by their names or the textbook on the shelf. They are now *inquirers*, leading other inquirers" (Kain, 1998, p. 46). Yet the problem persists because this shift in philosophy, combined with the demands for each classroom teacher, does not leave enough time to devote for cross-curriculum discussion.

Consequently, team interactions include matters of business rather than interconnections among subject areas. Dealing with deadlines, handling student concerns, and discussing upcoming assessments/events takes priority during team meetings. This "business", which reduces time, could be devoted to conversations concerning connections between the students' classes. "It's far easier to discuss the business of a field trip than it is to discuss the idea of interconnections among subject areas; we'll talk about the business of managing a particular student's behavior more readily than [how reading strategies can be applied across content areas]" (Kain, 1998, p. 45). Items that can be easily addressed take precedence on the team agenda because they do not add additional instructional responsibilities or intensive collaboration.

As the percentage of readers in America continually decreases, the need for teaching reading strategies is essential. However, even with explicit instruction of these strategies, students are unable to transfer and apply them to text outside of the language arts classroom. Within the middle school philosophy, teams of teachers have the opportunity to collaborate and use reading strategies to improve comprehension of both informational and fictional text across curriculum. Students' struggle to transfer reading strategies remains a problem due to staff resistance to accept the philosophy that all teachers are teachers of reading. Furthermore, this idea is challenged by time constraints. Nonetheless, it is crucial for teachers of all content areas to guide students in the practice of utilizing these tools to increase reading comprehension. This national problem will persist until teachers recognize their responsibilities to support this life-long skill of comprehension and parents support reading outside of school.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Evidence of reading comprehension problems existed in both Classrooms A and B, despite their differing grade levels and curriculums. In order to investigate the improvement of reading comprehension, several reading instruments were developed. They included: student, parent, and teacher surveys; areas of weaknesses within the adequate yearly progress (AYP) state assessment scores; and results from the Holt Rinehart Winston diagnostic reading assessment.

Site A- Analysis of State Standardized Test Scores

The Illinois Standard Achievement Tests (ISAT) is administered each spring to students in Classroom B. At the time the research topic was determined, students in Classroom A were not required to take the ISAT in the area of reading. Students' results are reported in four comparison groups to show performance relative to Illinois learning standards. The four performance levels for the learning areas tested are: exceeds standards, meets standards, below standards, and academic warning.

In the area of Reading, 19.9 percent of the eighth grade students at Site A did not meet state standards as measured on the 2005 ISAT. This percentage of students shows improvement in all four performance levels in relationship to previous years.

Table 1

ISAT Performance Reading Data, Site A

Student Performance Level	2003-2004 School Year	2004-2005 School Year
Warning	0.4%	0.0%
Below	25.2%	19.6%
Meets	67.3%	68.0%
Exceeds	7.1%	12.5%

Although no students were reported at the warning performance level, and there was growth in the percentage of students identified as below standards performance area from the previous year, the percentage of students not meeting standards remained significant. Approximately one-fifth of the student population was still unable to read at grade-level. Additionally, rapid improvements in the area of reading comprehension were crucial for the students in the racial/ethnic background, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities (those with Individualized Education Plans) subgroups. As reported in the 2005 school report card, 50.0 percent of the African-American students, 44.1 percent of the Hispanic, and 14.0 percent of the Asian/Pacific Islander eighth grade student population was below standards in reading. Of the students who were identified as economically disadvantaged (students who come from families receiving public aid; live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children; are supported in foster homes with public funds; or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches), 71.4 percent did not meet AYP. In addition, 62.7 percent of eighth grade students with disabilities (those with Individualized Education Plans) did not meet grade-level standards on the AYP assessment.

After reviewing the state assessment scores, both teacher researchers agreed that the results accurately reflect what is observed in the classroom. An intervention to improve reading comprehension was determined to be useful to equip the students with the necessary tools to improve reading comprehension; thereby increasing the number of students who meet the state standards.

Student Comprehension Entrance Survey- August 2006

Students were asked to complete a preliminary survey regarding independent reading and comfort with the application of reading strategies (Appendix A). In Part I of the survey conducted, students were asked to rate how frequently they read different types of literature (both informational and fictional) using the following scale: frequently (3), sometimes (2), never (1). Part II of the student survey directed students to assess how frequently they applied reading strategies (self-monitoring, visualizing, questioning, determining importance/main idea, making connections, inferring, and/or synthesizing) while reading, using the scale of frequently (3), sometimes (2), or never (1). Results indicated inconsistencies; however, over 90 percent of the students surveyed agreed that reading is necessary to succeed in the adult world. Even so, many students reported never reading informational or fictional text outside of the classroom setting.

Table 2

Student Comprehension Entrance Survey, Part I

Reported as Never Read	Classroom A	Classroom B
Informational Text	**25.9%**	**32.2%**
Fictional Text	**37.7%**	**44.0%**

Informational text included: newspapers, magazines, websites, historical books, auto/biographies, manuals/instructions, e-mail/chat rooms, textbooks/assignments. Fictional text included: novels, poems/song lyrics, plays, and comics. The substantial gap between the two genres of text reflects the shift in society's focus on computer/internet, television, and other technological advancements. With the continued emergence of more interactive media, it appears there is less time and/or motivation to read fictional text in the form of novels, short stories, plays, and comics.

This survey also provided information detailing the independent usage of reading comprehension strategies. A majority of the students in both classrooms surveyed indicated they sometimes make use of reading strategies before, during, or after reading. These results confirm the teacher researchers' observations, which revealed students were less apt to apply reading strategies without guidance and prompting. In Classroom B, nearly half of the students surveyed claimed that they never applied the strategies of self-monitoring and visualizing. The data supports the trend that as students progress through their elementary education, they dismiss the significance of self-monitoring and visualizing, which are viewed as "childish" and repetitive strategies. This information is supported by the data collected from eighth grade students in Classroom B, in addition to teacher researchers' observations and discussions with students. Students claim that applying such strategies frustrates them, as it interrupts the reading process.

Fewer than 20 percent of the total students surveyed frequently utilized the strategies of questioning or determining importance/main idea. The students' reluctance to use these strategies suggests a lack of familiarity with the steps necessary to develop such higher-level thinking. On the other hand, a majority of the students reported frequently inferring while reading, despite the fact that this strategy requires complex thinking. Predictions, a type of

inference, play a key role in reading instruction beginning in the primary grades, making students

comfortable with the application and use.   Therefore, the survey data reinforces the concept that

through continual instruction, reading comprehension strategies become more inherent.
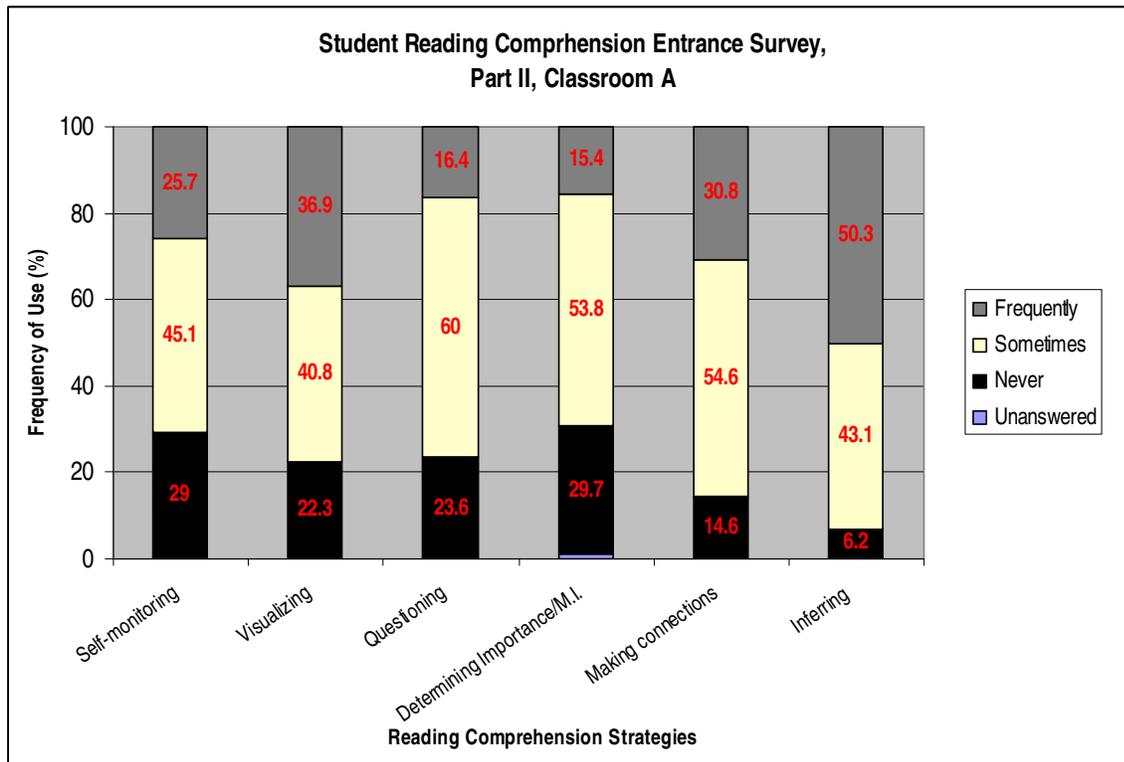
Figure 1. Student Reading Comprehension Entrance Survey, Part II, Classroom A
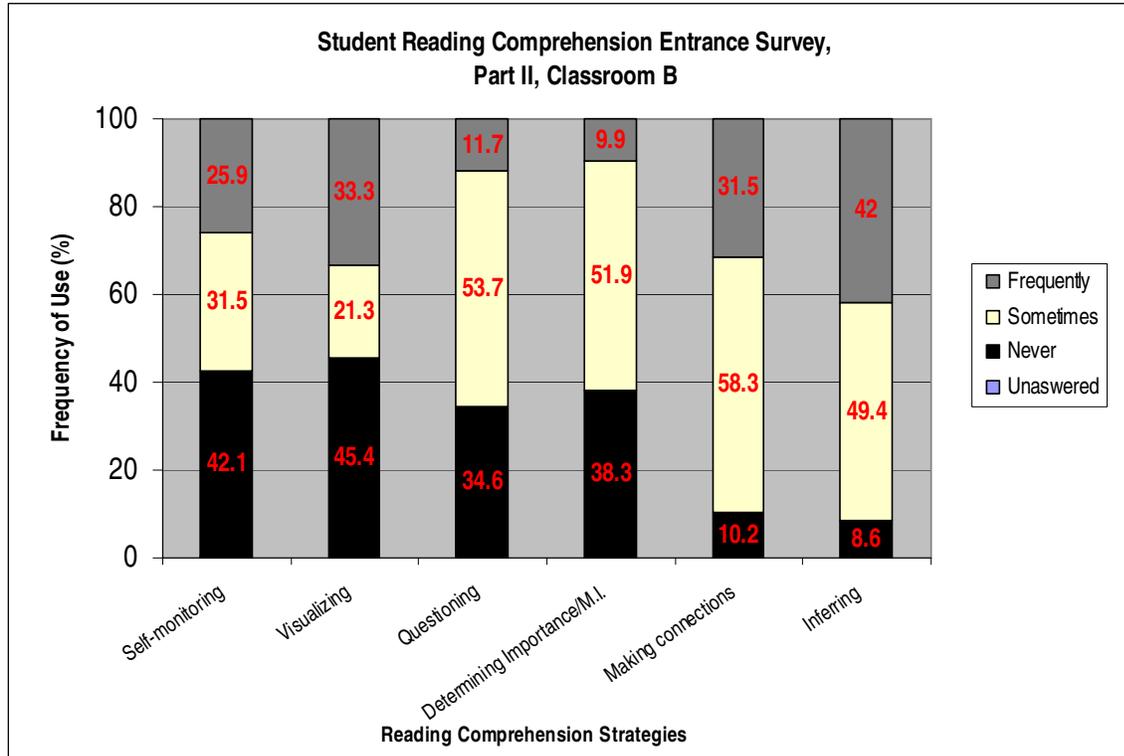
Figure 2. Student Reading Comprehension Entrance Survey, Part II, Classroom B

Parent Comprehension Entrance Survey- August 2006

　　　　Parent surveys (Appendix B) were administered to gain an understanding of the presence
of reading in the home environment. The questionnaire also asked for information about parent-
student communication regarding reading.   Statistics show that parents of the students involved
in the study seldom model and discuss what they are reading with their child. Additionally,
parents reported conversation concerning their students' reading material and comprehension as
being infrequent.

Table 3

Parent Comprehension Entrance Survey, Classroom A

	Never	Sometimes	Once/week	Two-three/ week	More than two-three/week
Do you share information that you read with your child?	5.0%	35.0%	25.0%	16.7%	18.3%
Do you communicate with your child about what he/she is reading?	3.3%	45.0%	13.3%	20.0%	18.3%
Do you communicate with your child regarding his/her comfort with reading?	11.9%	55.9%	13.6%	10.2%	8.5%

Table 4

Parent Comprehension Entrance Survey, Classroom B

	Never	Sometimes	Once/week	Two-three/ week	More than two-three/week
Do you share information that you read with your child?	5.8%	25.0%	26.9%	25.0%	17.3%
Do you communicate with your child about what he/she is reading?	1.9%	44.2%	17.3%	17.3%	19.2%
Do you communicate with your child regarding his/her comfort with reading?	25.0%	48.1%	9.6%	9.6%	7.7%

The recent decline in independent reading outside of the classroom across America, and within

the site classrooms, becomes clearer considering an average of 35.2 percent of the parents

surveyed share information they read with their child only sometimes or never at all.

Furthermore, the lack of discussion between parents and their student about reading

comprehension contributes to the widening gap between what is read and what is understood.

The responsibility for this communication does not lie solely with the parents, however; the parent survey reported that students were not forthcoming with sharing ways they have learned to improve their reading comprehension. In fact, only one-third of the students involved in the study volunteered information about the strategies and techniques learned in school.

Considering Comprehension Teacher Survey- August 2006

Staff members who worked on the same team with each teacher researcher completed a pre-study survey (Appendix C), which asked them to consider the use of reading in their classroom. Results highlighted a dramatic increase in the expectations for out-of-class reading between students of Classroom A (seventh grade) and students of Classroom B (eighth grade). For example, in seventh grade 60 percent of the teachers assigned outside reading one time each week; 40 percent of the academic teachers never assigned outside-of-class reading. Conversely, 80 percent of the eighth grade teachers surveyed expected their students to read outside of class at least two to three times per week. This severe increase in expectations for independent reading is unrealistic when considering the lack of practice in the content area classrooms with guidance provided by the teacher. Furthermore, the amount of time provided for silent reading in the classroom is minimal and reduces the students' opportunities to apply reading strategies independently to content area reading. The survey data reveals 40 percent of the teachers surveyed in both grade levels never allotted time in class for silent reading.

Considering Comprehension Teacher Survey
Classrooms A & B
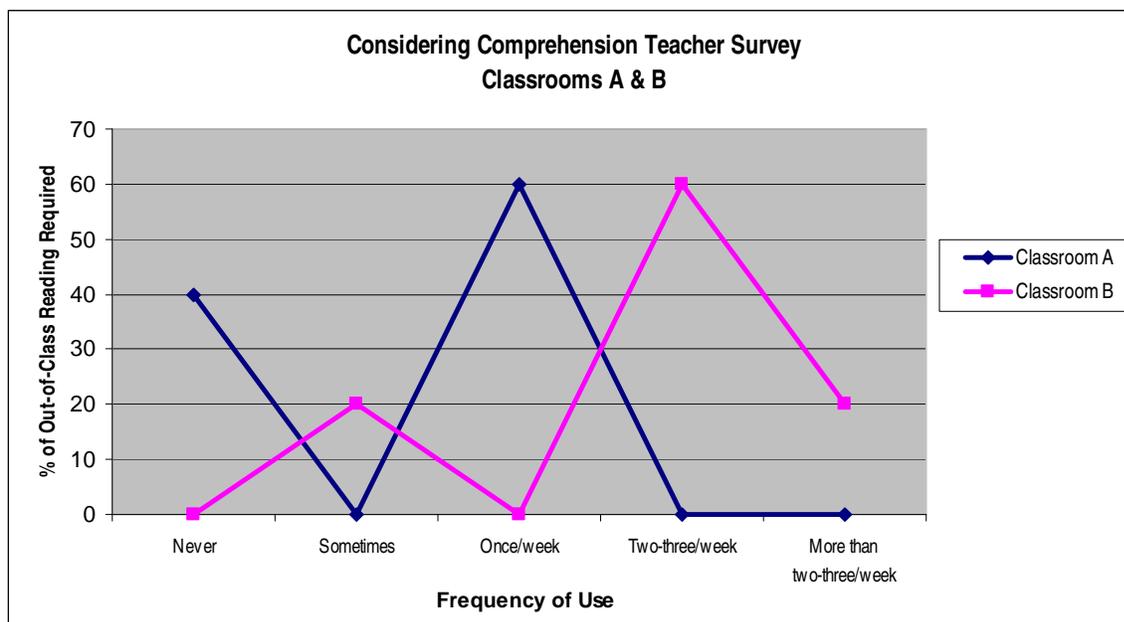
Figure 3. Considering Comprehension Teacher Survey, Classroom A & B

Holt Rinehart Winston Diagnostic Reading Assessment- August 2006

The teacher researchers administered reading comprehension diagnostic assessments to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the readers at the outset of the study. Text selections presented on the diagnostic assessment included both fictional and informational passages. All questions were designed to measure specific reading strategies. The strategies included: self-monitoring, visualizing, questioning, determining importance/main idea, making connections, inferring, and synthesizing.

In Classroom A (seventh grade), students struggled in the area of determining importance/main idea. Of these students, 21.1% were unable to correctly identify the main idea in fictional and/or informational texts. Furthermore, students experienced difficulty with the higher-level strategies of making connections and synthesizing.

Likewise, the students in Classroom B (eighth grade) found the strategies of making connections and synthesizing most difficult. These results suggest that students lacked the

practice required to fully develop the independent application and use of these strategies; in fact, often students were challenged even to define the strategies. In addition, the unfamiliar content of the passages indicates students were unable to make connections and synthesize.

Table 5

Holt Rinehart Winston Diagnostic Reading Assessment- Classroom A (Seventh Grade)

	Correct responses	Incorrect responses
Making Connections	69.0%	31.0%
Synthesizing	69.0%	31.0%

Table 6

Holt Rinehart Winston Diagnostic Reading Assessment- Classroom B (Eighth Grade)

	Correct responses	Incorrect responses
Making Connections	75.2%	24.8%
Synthesizing	79.6%	20.4%

The diagnostic assessment also proved useful in determining which types of questions caused students the most complications. Questions were classified into the following four categories: closed questions (questions from which answers can be found directly stated in the text), open questions (answers can be found within the text, but may require searching), complex questions (answers which require inferential thinking), and Socratic questions (answers which demand prior knowledge to form text-to-world connections). As expected, students were most successful in answering closed questions since these answers were readily available in the text. Also confirming the anticipated results, Socratic questions proved to be the most difficult. The sophisticated nature of this type of question was reflected in the results.

Probable Causes

Ensuring reading success is a critical issue many educators face. The goal of successful reading comprehension is to facilitate the development of a variety of skills and strategies among students to improve their understanding of text. Furthermore, it is expected that students transfer the reading skills and strategies to all areas of learning. Research shows that there are several underlying causes to explain why students do not select and apply appropriate reading strategies to both fictional and informational texts, thereby causing poor reading comprehension. The contributing factors to the lack of transfer and reading comprehension include: cultural and family influences, lack of exposure to informational text, inconsistent usage of strategy instruction and content area teachers' unwillingness to apply reading strategies within classrooms.

Cultural influences, specifically the rise in technological developments in America, have taken priority over reading in student leisure time. As technology increases, text competes with video games, television, and other electronic devices. After the *National Endowment for the Arts* (NEA) Reading at Risk report was released in 2004, Wayne Dawkins (2005) contended: "Youth, according to the report, are more inclined to use computers, the Internet and other electronic gadgets for entertainments, rather than novels" (p. 10). Likewise, according to Bintz, (1997), students spent approximately 21.4 hours per week watching television and playing video games. This time replaced reading at home, as Bintz reported that students spent 1.8 hours per week reading non-school material.

In addition to the rising rate of students engaged in technology rather than text, a second concern lies in how technology impacts student ability to visualize. Modern technology provides graphic and realistic action in television, video games, and movies. However, as students view

these media, they are not applying their imagination. Consequently, students lack the skills

necessary to engage in the reading strategy of visualization, creating details or images when

reading text (Wignell, 2001).   As students turn to technology instead of reading, they face a

severe disadvantage of less exposure to various texts and practice in developing reading skills

and comprehension.

      In addition to a cultural shift in how students across the nation spend leisure time, the

home environment contributes to poor reading comprehension. According to Hill-Clark (2005),

family characteristics and the home environment influence the development of cognitive skills

and reading abilities. Families are the first educators and play a critical role in literacy

development. In addition to providing appropriate reading materials, families can engage in

meaningful conversation with their children, and model a love of reading and writing. Parents'

reading behaviors are likely to have the greatest impact on kids' involvement with reading.

According to Scholastic's *Kids and Family Reading Report* however, the majority of parents

could be setting a better example for their children, as only 21% of parents are high frequency

readers (Yankelovich, Inc. and Scholastic, Inc., 2006, Parental Role in Kids' Reading, ¶ 2).

Furthermore, the study concludes that parents could do more to communicate the value of

reading to their children. If parents do not display interest and do not support or model reading

at home, students are less likely to engage in reading for leisure.

      Environmental issues are not solely responsible for students' deficiency in reading

comprehension, however; a lack of exposure to informational text until the upper elementary

grades further impedes understanding. A study conducted by Chall (1983) found fourth grade to

be a pivotal turning point in comprehension and reading achievement since curriculum begins to

rely more on textbooks, otherwise known as informational text (as cited in Allington, 2002,

p.16). This unfamiliar structure and terminology involves more specialized, technical terms and abstract ideas that demand a shift to inferential thinking and reliance upon prior knowledge. As a result, "students who have been making satisfactory progress up to this point now begin to struggle with reading, especially content-area reading. Many never seem to recover"(Allington, 2002, p. 17). An extreme emphasis on narrative texts during the lower elementary years spurs the problem according to Duke (2000), who found that students in observed classrooms spent an average of 3.6 minutes with informational text each day. Researchers site several reasons for this limited exposure, including: lack of resources (or appropriately leveled resources), teachers' own discomfort with the genre, and beliefs that the content and foreign structure is too rigorous for novice readers.

Nevertheless, such a disproportionate ratio of time spent reading and addressing the structure of informational text can be directly related to our nation's struggle with reading comprehension. As Duke (2004) points out, the limited use of informational text for curriculum purposes creates a paradox within our educational system:

> "We are surrounded by text whose primary purpose is to convey information about the social world. Success in schooling, the workplace, and society depends on our ability to comprehend this material. Yet many children and adults struggle to comprehend informational text." (40)

This inability to process and understand this genre persists, despite an increase in teachers' efforts to incorporate informational material, due to inconsistency in approach and application.

Simply inserting informational text within lessons will not accelerate comprehension skills. Particularly since reading this genre involves complex thinking skills. "Readers are called on to comprehend ideas that may be very challenging, and also to extrapolate and

remember the main ideas in order to integrate them with prior knowledge. [Additionally], nonfiction also requires readers to uncover organizational patterns in order to comprehend the relationship of ideas" (Boynton & Blevins, 2004, p. 35). Students left to read and comprehend content area material independently become easily frustrated and appear to lack the appropriate strategies to make meaning of this type of text.

Understanding and analyzing informational text is an abstract multi-step process; yet, this process does not receive adequate instructional time as students encounter increasingly difficult texts. This decline in direct instruction in reading and comprehension strategies at the secondary level adds to the comprehension complications, making it apparent that "lack of instruction contributes to the widening gap of reading abilities among students and their subsequent alienation from reading (Bryant, 2003; Baer & Nourie; Tovani & Keene, 2000)" (as cited in Park, 2005, p. 5). Without the necessary skills and strategies, students remain unable to read for comprehension; therefore, they are unable to achieve at their potential in all content areas. Furthermore, a feeling of apathy often surfaces as students realize they are poor readers but lack the knowledge of strategies to improve their reading abilities (D'Arcangelo, 2002).

Despite the emerging signs that call for strategy instruction, comprehension problems remain as a result of unwillingness to apply the strategies on both the students and teachers part. Cuevas (2003) finds: Students are seldom willing to expend the time and effort necessary to implement comprehension strategies, and many students initiate reading strategies only when directed by the teacher.

However there is reluctance among teachers, both language arts teachers and other content area teachers, to assume this responsibility to model strategy use. Teachers often assess comprehension, but do little to guide students in how to comprehend a variety of written text

structures. Instead, secondary teachers express a need to focus on the core curriculum, believing

students should already possess skills in applying comprehension strategies (Rieckhoff, 1997).

The educational mantra that all teachers are teachers of reading and writing continues to be sung;

however, this idyllic philosophy does not alter the perspectives of teachers who view enforcing

reading strategies as an additional responsibility to take on. Cresson (1999) and Digisi (1993)

cite several reasons that these teachers also fail to teach or integrate comprehension strategies

within their classroom: namely, a lack of obligation to teach content area reading, little to no

training in content area reading strategies, and an attitude that teaching reading is not their

responsibility. O'Brien and Stewart (1990) confirm this attitude exists with their study's

findings that secondary teachers rejected the notion that they are teachers of reading, continuing

to view themselves as purveyors of knowledge. The teachers involved did not see the relevance

of reading to their particular discipline or how reading strategies could be implemented in their

courses, suggesting that other courses were more appropriate for reinforcing reading.

Consequently, this negative attitude in response to applying reading strategies across content

areas prevents students from engaging in the essential practice and perpetuates the limited

exposure to informational texts, compounding problems with comprehension.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

A review of literature in the area of applying appropriate reading strategies suggests that explicit instruction of text structure and reading comprehension strategies should be rehearsed both in guided groups and independently. In addition, research shows when core reading strategies are applied to both fictional and informational texts, reading comprehension and transfer will improve.

For many years, educators have assessed reading comprehension; however, they have overlooked their responsibility to ensure that students have the necessary skills to make meaning of text. As Tovani (2000) reminds educators, "Reading teachers can do more than *measure* comprehension. With explicit instruction that demonstrates what good readers do, struggling readers can be taught *how* to comprehend text better" (p. 108). This can be done by integrating reading strategies into instruction, thereby "giving readers options for thinking about text when reading words alone doesn't produce meaning" (Tovani, 2004, p. 5). However, teachers cannot assume students will automatically know *how* to comprehend text through the mere explanation of core reading strategies. Beers (2003) finds: "To help dependent readers become independent readers, we must teach them what many of us, as independent readers, do with seemingly little effort. We must teach them strategies that will help them understand texts" (p. 40-1). These strategies include: self-monitoring (knowing when to adjust reading rate and reading strategies to understand different kinds of texts); visualizing (creating mental pictures that strengthen

inferential thinking); questioning (forming questions that will help keep the reader engaged, clarify confusion, stimulate research efforts, and promote deeper thinking about text); determining importance/main idea (identifying key ideas central to text meaning); making connections (thinking about connections formed between the text, other stories read, and/or the world); inferring (combining prior knowledge with textual information to interpret the text); and synthesizing (combining new information with existing knowledge to form an original idea or interpretation). Introducing students to these reading strategies is not the sole objective for teachers. Ultimately, the purpose in teaching students how to become strategic readers is to provide them with the tools essential to keep them engaged and reflective while thinking about what they read (Tovani, 2004).

In addition to explicit instruction of core reading strategies, a basic knowledge of text structures better equips students to select an effective reading strategy when attacking different types of text. "Many studies have shown text comprehension is improved when instruction is designed to teach students to recognize the underlying structure of text" (Florida Department of Education, 2005). This instruction becomes increasingly necessary as students encounter a wider range of texts in secondary education. There are two basic types of text: fictional and informational. Fictional text follows a recognizable story pattern with a beginning, middle, and end. Conversely, informational text, which conveys factual information, can be organized in a variety of ways. The core informational text structures that students encounter include: compare/contrast, cause/effect, chronological, description/list, question/answer, and problem-solution. A lack of familiarity with the organization of these text structures, combined with unfamiliar vocabulary, causes students to struggle in comprehending informational texts. These text structures differ greatly from fictional story lines. Furthermore, "The organization and

structure of text is inconsistent and unpredictable, and for the first time, children are required to 'read to learn'" (Bakken & Whedon, 2002, p. 230). As a result, it is essential to provide explicit instruction in the areas of recognizing key text features, identifying informational text structures, and applying appropriate structure-specific strategies. Rhoder (2002) reports: "Once students have identified the structure of a text, they can organize and reorganize its information and ideas through spatial organizing strategies such as graphic organizers, concept maps, webs, and frames" (p. 501). This framework assists students in monitoring their learning, in addition to encouraging them to use the appropriate reading strategies.

In order for students to use reading strategies effectively and identify text structures, teachers must carefully model the strategies, provide guidance and coaching, and allow time for students to practice what they are learning. "[Students] need to know what strategy to use and how, when, where, and why to use it. Most important, they need a classroom atmosphere that supports mindfulness, where they are able to learn strategies in authentic, nonthreatening situations" (Rhoder, 2002, p. 499). An approach found to be effective in meeting the needs Rhoder speaks of is Balanced Literacy. This instructional model promotes the transfer of comprehension strategies and is based on a constructivist framework, which includes teacher-directed instruction, followed by student-centered activities (*Literacy in Smithfield Public Schools, 2004*). According to the Smithfield Public Schools' report (2004), "Some students learn better from more explicit instruction, whereas other students may learn better from more student-centered instruction. Therefore, a balanced literacy approach combines teacher and student-centered instruction with the goal that all learning styles are addressed." The Balanced Literacy approach reflects an awareness of multiple learning styles, as students are led through the

following progression: read-alouds, shared/modeled reading, guided reading, and independent reading (Brown and Fisher, 2006, p. 39).

Read-aloud is the easiest of the four components to administer. The teacher selects a text and reads to the class in a whole group setting. According to Allen (2000), "reading aloud 'improves listening skills, builds vocabulary, aides reading comprehension, and has a positive impact on student's attitude toward reading'" (p. 39). In addition, this practice advances student fluency and intonation while reading.

Moving towards a shared responsibility in improving reading comprehension, teachers must use explicit instruction to guide their teaching during the shared/modeled reading components of the Balanced Literacy program. Neufeld (2006) describes the process of explicit instruction as "one in which the teacher must take an active role in teaching the strategy to be learned, rather than simply presenting it and hoping the students 'catch on' and learn to use it effectively" (p. 305). In shared/modeled reading, the teacher first presents the strategy, providing a basic definition and explains why and how it is useful to the class. Then teachers may lead class discussions regarding prior knowledge of comprehension strategies. Finally, teachers share a rationale for learning the strategy by showing students the necessary evidence of how the strategy presented can improve their reading comprehension (Neufeld, 2006, p. 305). The second step of explicit instruction marks the beginning of teaching students how to use the strategy. Teachers remain solely responsible for using the strategy at this juncture, demonstrating the strategy's effectiveness for their students through demonstrations of thinking aloud (Baumann & Schmitt; Pearson & Doyle, as cited in Neufeld, 2006). Providing students with this opportunity to witness how the strategy works is a critical step in strategy instruction, if meaningful learning is to occur. In thinking aloud, Brown and Fisher (2006) find: "teachers are

able to demonstrate the thought process they go through when reading. Shared reading helps

students build the relationship of text-to-self and text-to-world that they need to develop

literacy—that is, the ability to construct meaning from text" (p. 39). Meanwhile, as teachers

model the strategy, students follow along and annotate their copies of the text and/or complete

graphic organizers as directed by the teacher.

 After observing how the strategy can be applied before, during, and/or after reading, the

next step of explicit instruction calls for guided reading practice. "Allen (2000) calls guided

reading 'the heart of the balanced literacy program'" (Brown and Fisher, 2006, p. 39). This

collaborative approach to interpreting text allows "readers…to construct their own meaning—

consciously at first, but eventually [becoming] more automatic" (Tovani, 2000, p. 107). Students

receive support in this process by interacting with the teacher and their peers to acquire critical

concepts and skills.

The focus at this stage of the process is offering students with common reading skill

deficiencies multiple opportunities to practice utilizing the strategy in a supported environment.

Combining this "hands-on" approach with teacher encouragement, students begin to implement

the strategy with some assistance. "It is through guided reading that children are shown how to

read and can be supported as they read. Guided reading is the last major stepping stone on the

path to independent reading" (Lenz, 2005, p. 144). Students who have experienced both the

shared/modeled and guided reading components are better equipped to analyze and comprehend

a variety of text when reading independently (Brown and Fisher, 2006).

In the independent component of the balanced literacy approach, teachers provide

learning situations in which students assume full responsibility for using the strategy (Neufeld,

2006). While students use the strategy independently during this phase, the teacher remains an

integral part of the acquisition process to help ensure the strategy is used appropriately and to help build students' confidence. Teacher guidance during the independent phase serve as the bridge that helps transport readers from dependent to independent status.

In an attempt to facilitate independence in reading comprehension across content areas, the reading process can be broken down into three stages: before reading, during reading, and after reading. Before reading strategies (predicting, questioning, visualizing, and making connections) activate prior knowledge, set a purpose for reading, and engage the reader from the outset. In order for students to make connections with what they already know and what they are going to read, students must activate their background knowledge before they even begin reading (D'Arcangelo, 2002). Furthermore, Robb argues (2003):

> The more students know about a topic, the better they're able to comprehend new
> information about it. This is because they can fit new knowledge into already existing
> schemas. The more they've thought about the ideas that may be present in the text (as
> they do during connection and prediction), the richer their schemas will be. (p. 36)

At the before reading stage of the reading process, students will also recognize the framework of text and identify the proper text structure. When students take time to preview the text and gain a sense of the author's purpose and how the text is organized, they can use that text structure and the author's intent to frame their own learning as they begin to read (D'Arcangelo 2002).

Moving into the actual text, during reading strategies (self-monitoring, questioning, visualizing, making connections, inferring, and determining importance/main idea) allow students to monitor their comprehension and keep moving forward through their reading. To assist students in applying these strategies during reading, students can complete graphics organizers, make marginal notes, and draw pictures. According to D'Arcangelo (2002):

These strategies help students engage personally and respond to the text, consolidate ideas, and find a reason for the sequence of the information…Reading is a recursive process that requires active engagement. All of these are tools that allow us to be more actively involved while reading. (p. 14)

Hence, as students play an active role in the reading process by engaging in the text, they gain control of their own learning.

Once the students have read the text, after reading strategies (determining importance/main idea, making connections, questioning, inferring, and synthesizing) help students to interpret, analyze, and deepen their understanding. D'Arcangelo (2002) contends, "The reading task is not finished when the student has read the pages; it becomes even more intense then…After reading, we engage differently with the author, ideas, and our own learning from other sources" (p. 14). After reading strategies help students to solidify and remember ideas presented in the text.

Applying these strategies throughout the reading process to various text structures will not only strengthen students' ideas and comprehension, but will also promote transfer to other content areas. However, the success of this transfer depends on the cooperation of colleagues in other subject areas. "Reading becomes more meaningful to students when it is seen as a critical part of all courses rather than as an isolated skill in one" (Vacca, 2002). To show the value of reading strategies in multiple settings, content teachers should encourage the usage of specific strategies within lessons. This support provides the necessary scaffolding for struggling readers to comprehend successfully (Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 2005). If strategy instruction is solely the responsibility of the English/language arts teacher, transfer will never occur. "While English teachers spend considerable time addressing reading skills in their classes…It is difficult to cover

every type of text a student will encounter outside of their classrooms. Reading instruction is a responsibility shared by all teachers, regardless of level or content" (Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 2005). Transfer is more likely to occur by consistently applying approaches within different courses. "Confident, proficient readers will not magically emerge from the door of an English classroom; rather, skilled readers emerge from classrooms where effective reading strategies are taught and practiced regularly" (Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 2005).

Therefore, content area teachers must provide opportunities for students to collaboratively, and in time independently, select strategies for different types of text. It is not necessary for content area teachers to provide direct instruction on the reading strategies; their role is to incorporate the students' acquired strategies into their content area repertoire. This instruction requires review, practice, and routine application (Vacca, 2002). "Reading strategies are not difficult to incorporate into a lesson. Something as simple as encouraging students to take notes in three columns to relate what they're learning in lectures and lab experiences with the text materials can help them see how the information connects together" (D'Arcangelo, 2002, p. 14). Consequently, content area teachers do not need to use their time to teach strategies; instead, their role is to align methods of instruction with the reading strategies taught in language arts classes to enhance understanding and interest. The parallel use of comprehension strategies across curriculums increases each student's chance of achieving independence in a strategy's use. According to Gambrell, Kapinus, and Wilson (1987), students need to "use strategies in a meaningful context" (p. 641). Furthermore, they contend "students need to be shown that the…strategy they are learning has direct application in the course material they are assigned to read" (Gambrell, et al., 1987, p. 641). This need can be met by using content area materials during explicit instruction of reading instructions, benefiting the students in all content areas.

Ultimately, the goal of a strategic reading program is to equip students with skills to apply to a variety of texts, thereby improving their comprehension. The final stepping stone in order to achieve this goal is fostering students' independent use of these strategies. Inevitably, comprehension among students will vary; so, it is necessary to include not only collaborative opportunities, but also time for students to independently "approach and read texts in a strategic fashion—first choosing and then using the appropriate strategy or strategies given their purpose for reading" (Pressley, 2002; as reported in Neufeld, 2006, p. 305). With a united effort by all content area teachers to model and utilize balanced literacy and create collaborative opportunities to process text, "students acquire both concepts critical to curricular content and learning strategies they need to be independent learners and processors of information" (Bulgren & Scanlon, 1997-98, p. 292). Utilizing strategy-based instruction across curriculums is essential to help students achieve optimal reading comprehension, which is "dependent not only on readers' knowledge of specific strategies, but also on their knowledge of when to use each strategy in their repertoire" (Malone & Mastropieri, 1992, p. 278).

<div align="center">Project Objectives and Processes</div>

As a result of the systematic implementation of a plan utilizing a variety of reading strategies during the period of September 2006 through January 2007, the targeted seventh and eighth grade students at the research site will increase their ability to select and apply appropriate reading strategies to both fictional and informational texts, as measured by teacher-constructed pre and post assessments; student, teacher and parent surveys; along with anecdotal records.

Project Statements

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. The students will be provided explicit instruction of core reading strategies (self-monitoring, visualizing, questioning, determining importance/main idea, making connections, inferring, and synthesizing).

2. The students will be introduced to multiple text structures to help differentiate between fictional and informational texts.

3. The students will work in guided reading groups and independently to determine and apply appropriate reading strategies to a variety of texts.

4. The students will have opportunities to apply reading strategies across curriculums to enhance transfer of learning.

5. The desk configuration will be adjusted to facilitate guided reading and posters will be displayed in multiple classrooms to encourage application and transfer of reading comprehension strategies.

Project Action Plan

The teacher researchers developed a plan to systematically implement the teaching and application of reading strategies in order to enhance reading comprehension of fictional and informational text.

Pre-week

Prior to the first full week of the study, a course introduction newsletter and consent form will be distributed to the targeted populations. In addition, students, teachers, and parents will be asked to complete preliminary surveys regarding comfort with reading and application of reading strategies.

<u>Week 1</u>

In the first week of the study, the targeted populations will be administered a pre-assessment to evaluate their use of reading strategies. Additionally, students will be given an overview of the core reading strategies (self-monitoring, visualizing, questioning, determining importance/main idea, making connections, inferring, and synthesizing). By using Oliver Wendall Holmes' "Skylight Model", an explanation of higher-level thinking will set a focus on elevating comprehension with reading strategies. Utilizing a think-aloud approach in a whole group setting, each teacher researcher will apply the strategy of self-monitoring to a selected short story. In pairs, students will then read a leveled short story and practice the self-monitoring strategy, stopping intermittently to clarify new or confusing parts of text using post-it notes.

<u>Week 2-3</u>

Each teacher researcher will conduct a shared reading in a whole group setting, modeling the strategies of questioning and visualizing. Emphasis will be placed upon developing higher-level thinking questions using Question-Answer-Relationship (QAR) and creating and maintaining vivid visualizations that enhance comprehension. Students will then practice the process in cooperative groups, and ultimately, independently.

<u>Week 4-6</u>

In order to strengthen student confidence and accuracy when using the strategies of determining importance/main idea, each teacher researcher will provide direct instruction of various forms of text structures (fictional and informational) and train students in how structure helps determine main ideas. Students will then identify and determine important ideas and themes from a variety of selected texts in a guided reading environment. Ultimately, students

will practice applying this strategy independently and attempt to transfer it to cross-curricular texts.

<u>Week 7</u>

Each teacher researcher will conduct a shared reading in a whole group setting, modeling the strategy of making connections, specifically text-text and text-world connections. Student pairs will practice making these higher-level connections using Kylene Beers' "Say Something" technique with a selected short story from the basal text. Student connections will then be shared in a whole group setting.

<u>Week 8-10</u>

Strengthening their ability to make text-text and text-world connections, students will practice making connections across curriculums using subject-area textbooks. The students' ability to make these connections will give them the necessary support to form inferences. In guided reading groups, each teacher researcher will conduct a shared reading to model the strategy of making inferences. Students will then practice this strategy within guided reading groups. Groups more comfortable with this strategy will begin to apply it to independent reading material and demonstrate an ability to make inferences across the curriculums.

<u>Week 11-12</u>

Combining the reading strategies taught thus far, each teacher researcher will introduce the strategy of synthesizing through a shared reading. In guided reading groups, students will work cooperatively to make new meaning of text and develop original ideas or interpretations using multiple strategies already discussed. After observing a modeled presentation, students will be asked to apply and transfer this strategy to a self-selected piece of informational text and share their synthesized ideas with the class.

<u>Week 13</u>

The class will be divided into cooperative reading groups. Each group will be assigned a section of a picture book to read and analyze using their acquired reading strategies. The class will then reconvene to share the analysis of their section of the text and, by synthesizing, determine the different points of view from which the book is told.

<u>Week 14</u>

In efforts to help students practice selecting the proper reading strategy for a variety of texts, students will be asked to bring self-selected informational articles. They will independently select and apply reading strategies appropriate for the specific text. In guided reading groups overseen by each teacher researcher, students will then share the article and provide evidence for the selection of the strategies utilized. The teacher researcher and peers will then share feedback regarding the effectiveness of the strategy selected.

<u>Week 15</u>

During the final week of the study, each teacher researcher will administer a post-test that will provide feedback on the application of reading strategies to texts. Post-study surveys will be distributed to students, parents, and teachers. These measurement tools, along with teacher researcher anecdotal records, will provide the data to determine the effectiveness of the study.

<div align="center">Methods of Assessment</div>

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, pre and post tests covering the content and skills associated with reading comprehension will be conducted. In addition, pre and post study surveys will be administered to students, their respective teachers and parents. Anecdotal records will be maintained throughout the study by each teacher researcher. To assist the teacher researchers in the formation of guided reading groups, students will take the Holt Rinehart and

Winston Diagnostic Reading Assessment. This assessment offers data regarding students'

reading ability.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

Intervention Overview

The objective of this action research project was to increase reading comprehension through the application and transfer of reading strategies in seventh and eighth grade classrooms. Explicit instruction of core reading strategies including: self-monitoring, visualizing, questioning, determining importance/main idea, making connections, inferring, and synthesizing was the primary intervention utilized to increase reading comprehension. Other interventions deemed necessary to facilitate improvement in reading comprehension were exposure to multiple text structures, both fictional and informational texts, and implementation of reader's workshop. The reader's workshop framework consisted of: shared/modeled readings, guided reading practice, independent application of reading strategies, and goal setting during teacher/student conferences. To solidify the acquired strategies, students were asked to complete metacognitive reflections on the strategies presented.

The teacher researchers developed a plan to systematically implement the teaching and application of reading strategies during a sixteen-week period. Prior to the first full week of the study, the subjects and their families were informed of the project's purpose. Students completed a preliminary survey, which assessed familiarity with the core reading strategies and frequency of use; meanwhile, parents and teachers documented their observations and estimations of students' comprehension abilities. Students appeared very conscientious and

honest with their feedback on the pre-survey. On the other hand, staff members surveyed

seemed annoyed and automatically defensive, assuming that the teacher researchers expected

strategy instruction to occur within all content area classrooms. At the beginning of week one,

each teacher researcher administered the Holt Rinehart Winston Reading Diagnostic Assessment

to establish areas of strengths and areas of difficulty with reading comprehension. Students were

given this assessment to determine strategies and text structures requiring more focus and

attention.   To alleviate students' anxiety, they were informed that the assessment would not

impact their grade, rather it would set the basis for the study. Each teacher researcher observed

that students took the pre-assessment seriously and understood its value.

   After the diagnostic assessment, each teacher researcher presented Oliver Wendell

Holmes' Skylight Model to provide a visual representation and rationale for the use of reading

strategies in order to achieve higher-level thinking and increased reading comprehension.

Having discussed goals and expectations for the focus of this project, the teacher researchers

shared a PowerPoint overview (Appendix D) of the eight core reading strategies, affectionately

nicknamed the "BIG 8" reading strategies by students. Students seemed eager to share their

prior knowledge of some of the reading strategies during the presentation. However, taking

notes on the teacher-created organizer (Appendix E) from a television screen, rather than the

projection screen (due to technical difficulties), impeded student focus.

   Self-monitoring was set as the initial strategy to help students determine aspects of the

text causing difficulty and/or complications while reading. Furthermore, this strategy introduced

several fix-up strategies available for the students to employ when "stuck" during the reading

process. Each teacher researcher modeled the use of self-monitoring through a think-aloud

approach. The students of Classroom A were asked to apply the self-monitoring strategy to a

piece of fictional text within pairs, while the students of classroom B utilized this strategy in cooperative reading groups. Despite the graphic organizers provided (Appendix F, G, H), teacher observations maintained students were off-task during reading. Most likely this resulted from a combination of factors: students' lack of familiarity with teacher expectations and cooperative group responsibilities, inflated self-assessment of reading ability, and the strategy itself. An additional obstacle encountered with the implementation of this strategy was student resistance. Advanced language arts students in both Classrooms A and B exhibited defiant attitudes when asked to stop while reading to discuss and record possible fix-up strategies. Furthermore, these students appeared offended and teacher researchers noted the students labeling this task as "trivial" and "juvenile".

In an attempt to activate students' mental movies and engage them more fully in the reading process, teacher researchers selected visualizing as the second reading strategy taught during the study. Placement of this strategy early in the study was deliberate since most students had been exposed to this technique for several years. As expected, students grasped the concept of visualizing fairly quickly and enjoyed participating in creating mental imagery of texts. Presented to the students through a read-aloud approach, teachers asked students to illustrate the images that appeared in their mind (Appendix I). After completing their independent story board, students shared their illustrations with peers in a think-pair-share. Class discussion ensued, concerning the depictions and what words drove students to create them. Following the introductory notes and activity, both classrooms moved on to guided reading groups to facilitate the practice of visualization during the reading process. However, the teacher researcher in classroom B found it difficult to maintain strategy instruction in the mainstream language arts classes with a longer piece of fictional text, *The Diary of Anne Frank.* This text was found in the

basal reader and mandated by the district curriculum. After teacher led think-alouds and shared readings, students grappled with applying both self-monitoring and visualizing to an extensive piece of text.

In efforts to differentiate instruction, the teacher researchers developed a sketch and reflect activity to enhance higher-level thinking for advanced learners (Appendix J). Again, advanced students displayed frustration in response to engaging in what they considered an "elementary" activity. Yet, to their dismay, most visualizations did not demonstrate sophisticated thinking. Ultimately, throughout the study, students continued to develop actual pictures without complication; however, there appeared to be a disconnect when asked to support their visuals with sensory details from the text.

Moving onward to the questioning strategy, the teacher researchers planned to instruct students in how to bridge this gap between text and higher-level understanding. Teacher researchers determined that an early focus on this strategy, while still in the study's formative stages, was essential considering the compelling research that heralded questioning as the "strategy that propels readers forward" (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, p. 81). Although most students appeared capable of naturally asking questions during the reading process, these questions were predominately of the closed question variety, and did little to further students' overall comprehension. Referencing Holmes' Skylight Model once again, the teacher researchers explained the need for students to ask more complex questions to move past a surface-level understanding of text.

Students in both Classroom A and B defined the four major types of questions (closed, open, complex, and Socratic) through a guided note presentation (Appendix K). In addition to discussing the definition of each question category, the teachers established the purpose for

utilizing each kind of question, and modeled formulating examples of each variety. Following

this overview, students of Classroom A and B observed their teacher formulating questions on a

teacher-created log while reading the beginning of a short story and pausing intermittently to

think aloud. Students soon began assisting the teacher by volunteering questions that came to

mind. Originally, the teacher researcher in Classroom A planned for the class to disband from

whole group instruction into cooperative reading trios to continue applying the questioning

strategy. However previous observations of the mainstream students' lack of focus within small

groups, combined with an unwillingness to pause while reading to reflect and question, prompted

the teacher to modify the assignment. In order to further demonstrate appropriate times and

places to pause and question, the teacher played an audio recording of the short story. This

modification freed the students to focus on visualizing the events of the story and form questions.

Once finished with the story, they were asked to review the questions formulated and categorize

them, according to the four major varieties. As anticipated, students seemed confused and

unsure with this portion of the assignment, particularly with identifying between the complex

and Socratic questions.

   In contrast, the students of Classroom B were able to follow the set of example questions

modeled by the teacher researcher and contribute their own inquiries to interpret meaning of the

text. In fact, most students demonstrated an intense desire to construct complex and Socratic

questions, as if they viewed the devolvement of higher-level questions as a game. The

competitive nature of the middle school student emerged as students began to compare which

question was the "best" (higher-level and thought-provoking). Yet, as with the students in

Classroom A, the teacher researcher in Classroom B noted difficulty for some students to

correctly classify which type of question was raised.

Since the existence of different types of questions seemed new to most students, the teacher researchers continued to incorporate the new questioning vocabulary in later assignments. In one such follow-up assignment, the teacher researcher from Classroom A instructed her students to independently form questions on Post-its while reading. The following day, students were asked to categorize their questions and place their Post-its under the designated category on the chalkboard. Students of Classroom B were asked to complete a similar assignment, in which they were required to continue reading and posing questions to an assigned section of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in guided reading groups. Students were expected to classify their questions and share them during large group discussion. Not only did this activity help clarify student comprehension, but it also presented a strong visual that reaffirmed the teacher researchers' suspicions: students most frequently asked surface-level questions (of the closed and open variety) without teacher-led directives. And, while these types of questions did help keep the readers engaged and monitored their comprehension, they did not challenge the readers to build and strengthen higher-level thinking skills.

During the questioning strategy overview, advanced students in both Classrooms A and B followed a similar procedure in regards to notes and teacher-modeled reading. After utilizing the questioning strategy within cooperative groups and displaying more confidence with the categorization of questions, teachers put these students to the test, asking them to form discussion questions for Langston Hughes' "Dreams". They were further challenged to try and balance the variety of questions. Results of this extension activity were two-fold: students gained an awareness of how to develop questions which required critical thinking skills (complex and Socratic questions, for which answers cannot be found directly in text), and

students witnessed how any piece of text, regardless of its length or complexity, should spark questions.

Student reluctance to stop and question before, during, and after reading was another difficulty encountered during the questioning segment of this study. Despite the modeled readings and teacher encouragement during guided and independent opportunities, the usage of this strategy remained inconsistent. A majority of the classroom A and B students became more willing to do this during the reading process, especially when prompted by an organizer or handout; but, they did not demonstrate an understanding of how each reading strategy becomes more effective when applied in all three phases: before, during, and after.

Progressing through the strategy instruction in efforts to assist students in identifying key ideas central to text meaning, determining importance/main idea was the subsequent reading strategy studied. Each teacher researcher began discussion of this strategy by applying it to fictional text, in which students were asked to identity and analyze thematic connections with textual evidence to support their ideas. Graphic organizers constructed by the teacher researchers assisted students in determining the main idea through a step-by-step technique, in which students were asked to first identify the topic of the text, then provide detail sentences to support the topic, and finally establish a main idea (Appendix L). Although most students appeared comfortable determining key ideas in fictional text, they struggled with supporting thematic connections with text specific examples.

In addition to working with determining importance/main idea in fiction, students in Classrooms A and B studied how to find meaning in informational text. However, due to students' lack of familiarity with informational text, before further instruction of the strategy ensued, teacher researchers introduced informational text features and structures through explicit

instruction. The teacher researchers created several graphic organizers to support students in taking notes (Appendix M). The organizers were an effective tool to assist students in organizing ideas during class discussion, the teacher researchers were disappointed with the lack of prior knowledge students possessed, given their exposure to informational text in content area classes.

Each teacher researcher continued instruction with the strategy of determining importance/main idea through shared/modeled readings and guided reading groups (Appendix N). Students appeared to acquire a firm understanding and application of informational text features before and during reading (i.e. predicting key ideas considering text title, bold/italicized words, pictures, and/or graphics). However, even with guided practice, the teacher researchers observed students in the mainstream language arts classes finding difficulty in determining text structure without prompting and support of their identification with signal words from the text. Consequently, both teacher researchers spent more time than initially outlined in the study action plan to facilitate student understanding and practice of the connection between text structure and important ideas. Advanced language arts students were able to grasp the concepts introduced with informational text and apply them with ease. Consequently, the advanced students in Classroom B worked through an informational text project that linked thematic analysis of their literature unit with the reading strategy of determining importance/main idea (Appendix O). Students rose to the challenge in completing this project, displaying enthusiasm and knowledge of how to interpret significant ideas conveyed through informational text and its corresponding features.

Seeing that students had been introduced to the core reading strategies that would assist them in literal comprehension, the teacher researchers proceeded to instruction of making

connections, which required critical thinking as students made meaning of the text through complex relationships. Given that students had experience with making connections to text, the teacher researchers chose to focus on students constructing more complicated relationships by connecting what they read with their prior knowledge of other texts and happenings in the world. In order to discuss expectations and model use of the strategy, the teacher researchers guided students in taking-notes (Appendix P). Students in each classroom participated in several readers' workshop sessions, in which they practiced making connections to both fictional and informational texts. Throughout the shared and guided reading sessions of reader's workshop, students exhibited confidence in making thoughtful text-text and text-world connections. However, as with the strategies previously discussed, students found it challenging to elaborate on their connections by explaining how the ideas relate and provide specific text evidence to defend their conclusions. The teacher researchers observed that this problem was especially apparent when students worked independently. Students relied on teacher or peer support to make connections to texts and failed to recognize the need to explain how the connection helped them to better comprehend what was read.

Inferring, one of the more complex reading strategies, was strategically placed near the end of the study. Introduction to this comprehension technique followed the established method of delivery, beginning with guided notes (Appendix Q). To better explain and define this practice, the teacher researchers formed a word equation to demonstrate how a combination of two reading strategies previously learned (prior knowledge and connecting to the text) guides the formation of inferences. Each teacher researcher established the three-step process for forming inferences through a Power point presentation, which included a modeled, followed by a guided, practice paragraph from which inferences were created. Students were observed to develop

inferences naturally and quickly for these isolated, fictional paragraphs. Yet, when asked at the end of that class to recall two elements essential in forming inferences, students struggled to remember. Comparing this particular occurrence with numerous other observations, the teacher researchers noted the dual complexities of this higher-level strategy. In some cases, students demonstrating difficulty with basic reading skills did not have the cognitive ability to interpret abstract questions since their efforts were focused on the actual decoding of words. Meanwhile, in other cases, strong readers were sometimes able to arrive at the inference, or answer, but could not determine how this information was garnered.

In Classroom A, the teacher researcher witnessed complications at both ends of the spectrum, with mainstream and advanced language arts students. While students grew more comfortable with making inferences in shared/guided settings with the assistance of graphic organizers (Appendix R), when left to answer an inferential question independently the strategy did not transfer. Even after the teacher researcher deviated from the action research outline, spending another week focused on inferring practice, a majority of students remained perplexed. Their inability to transfer this strategy, and even define it appropriately was clearly observed through an informal assessment/exit slip (Appendix S). Many of the mainstream students demonstrated an inability to think of a real world inference (one that occurs within daily life). Several advanced students in Classroom A showed an emerging understanding of this strategy and how to use the three-step process to better comprehend text by the end of the two-week focus, however.

Comparatively, students of Classroom B seemed to absorb this strategy more quickly. The nature of the text selections can be attributed to supporting these students in making inferences within cooperative learning groups and on their own. Students practiced the

application of inferring while studying the elements of suspense in short story selections. Inferring was almost inherent as the foreshadowing embedded in suspense writing moved students through analysis of the texts. At the same time, like students in Classroom A, some students experienced difficulty without teacher-directed guidance. Furthermore, limited out-of-school experiences and/or prior knowledge needed to make inferences impeded some students' ability to infer. Nevertheless, the use of cooperative groups drove student leaders to support these students.

The disparity between Classroom A and Classroom B is accredited to Classroom A students' limited exposure this more complex strategy in previous grades, thus a greater reliance upon the same kind of strategies at lower grades (visualizing, connections, questioning). Additionally, both teacher researchers conclude that the text selections in Classroom B enhanced the application of inferring as well as a cognitive readiness, given the age difference between the classrooms.

Synthesizing was the culminating reading strategy of the study, due to the fact that it requires students to self-select and combine several of the acquired strategies to develop higher-level comprehension. In order for students to construct a visual representation and definition of synthesizing, the teacher researchers asked the students to complete jigsaw puzzles in cooperative learning groups. After completion of the puzzles, students were asked to complete a metacognitive reflection and consider what they learned through this activity. Some students in Classrooms A and B were not able to recognize the analogous relationship between the jigsaw puzzle and the "BIG 8" reading strategies. However, classroom leaders identified how puzzle pieces represented the reading strategies and the puzzle itself symbolized synthesizing.

Following introductory notes on synthesizing (Appendix T), the teacher researchers modeled applying a variety of reading strategies which demonstrated how to form synthesis while reading *See the Ocean* written by Estelle Condra.   In Classroom A, students were asked to track the teacher's selection of strategies and determine how that strategy helped the teacher clarify meaning. Meanwhile, in Classroom B, the teacher researcher modeled this practice during the initial reading. Following this think-aloud, the teacher researcher reread the text, while requiring students to trace their own application of reading strategies and explain how the strategies furthered their meaning of the text. All in all, students in both classrooms appeared capable of monitoring their usage of individual strategies; and yet, they were unable to put these strategies together and synthesize (Appendix U).

Encouraging students to use all of the strategies and develop more sophisticated thinking skills, teacher researchers developed a guided reading activity involving informational text (Appendix V). The teacher researchers observed that most students relied on applying the same basic set of reading strategies, such as: self-monitoring, visualizing, and lower-level questioning. Not that this detracts from the value of these tactics, however the dependence upon them prevented students from challenging themselves to use higher-level strategies that require critical thinking.

Since advanced language arts students absorbed the synthesis strategy more quickly, the teacher researchers prepared an extension lesson based on Anthony Brown's picture book, *Voices in the Park*, which is told from four different character's perspectives. Within guided reading groups, determined by their Lexile ranges, students were assigned a specific section of the text to read and examine. In order to make meaning of cryptic text and illustrations, the

students were instructed to apply a variety of the "BIG 8" strategies and explain how these strategies helped them (Appendix W).

After each group completed their analysis of their assigned section, the class reconvened to present each "voice" (perspective) sequentially. As students shared their interpretations, other groups were excited to connect their respective section and the one being presented. Although students expressed some initial irritation when presented with the pages of a children's book which was open to interpretation, the enthusiastic reactions and in-depth discussions which occurred during this lesson clearly demonstrated the importance of synthesizing. This activity allowed the students an opportunity to solidify their understanding of synthesis and elevated the teacher researcher's expectations for these students.

<div align="center">Presentation and Analysis of the Results</div>

Student Comprehension Post- Survey- January 2007

At the conclusion of the study, each teacher researcher administered a post-study survey (Appendix X). Students were asked to reassess how frequently they apply the reading strategies of self-monitoring, visualizing, questioning, determining importance/main idea, making connections, inferring, and/or synthesizing while reading, using the scale of: frequently (3), sometimes (2), or never (1). Results indicated an increase in the application of all eight strategies. Most notably, there was a dramatic increase in the usage of making connections, questioning, and visualizing for students in both Classrooms A and B.

Comparison of Student Reading Comprehension Surveys
Classroom A
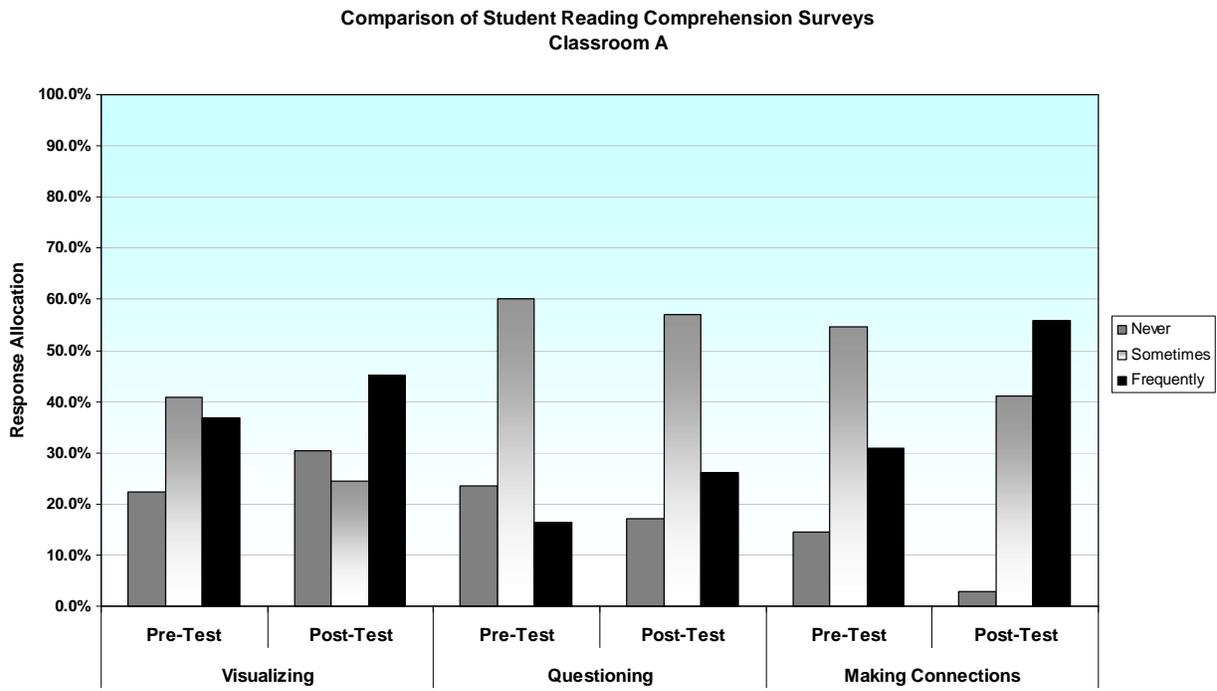
Figure 4. Comparison of Student Reading Comprehension Surveys, Classroom A

**Comparison of Student Reading Comprehension Surveys**
Classroom B
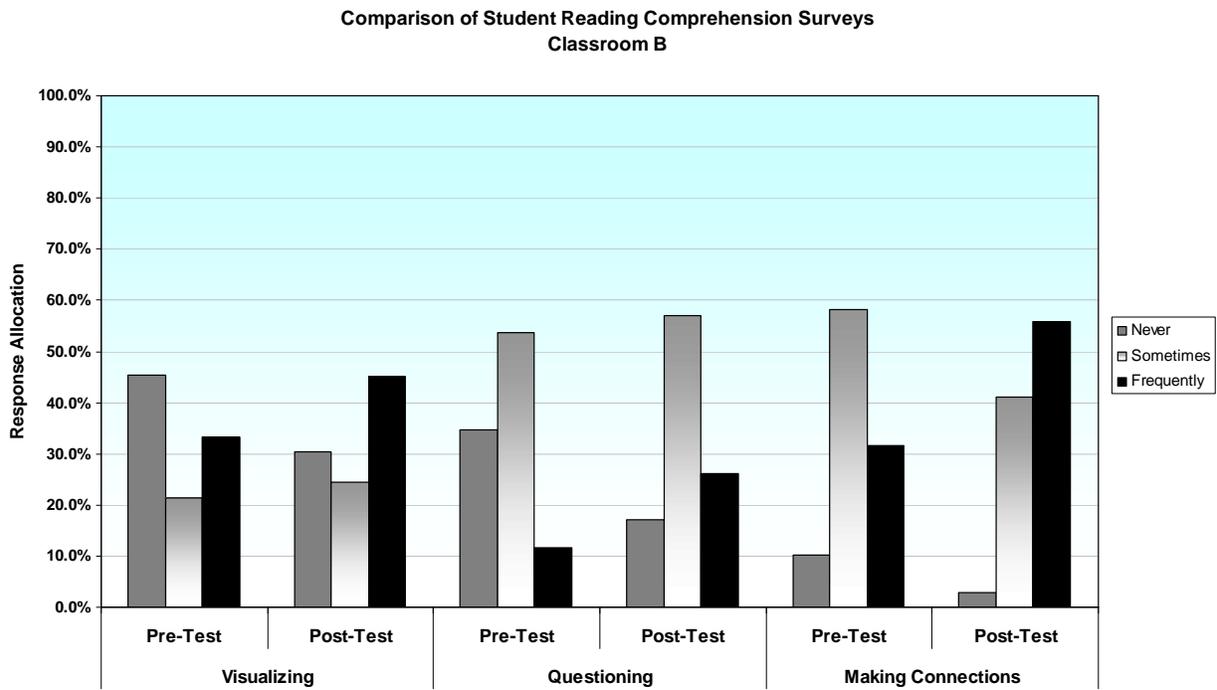
Figure 5. Comparison of Student Reading Comprehension Surveys, Classroom B

Teacher researchers attributed the progress in these areas to student familiarity with these strategies. A combination of the students' prior knowledge of these strategies, along with consistent prompts to utilize the strategies before, during, and after reading, led to the autonomous use of the said strategies. Classroom B statistics supported this in which 10.3 % of its students made inferences more frequently.

Parent Comprehension Post-Survey- January 2007

Parents were also presented with a post-survey to gauge their observations of reading strategies at use within the home environment (Appendix Y). In Part I of the survey, parents were asked to share their beliefs about their student's reading ability by answering yes or no for each question. The parent feedback from Part II of this study reflected parent observations. This information was assessed through a scale of: once/week, sometimes, or never. Statistics show that communication about comprehension techniques increased by 21.1% in Classroom A and 23.0% in Classroom B throughout the course of the study. However, teacher researchers believe parents were encouraged to respond affirmatively, aware of the focus on reading strategies within these classrooms. In addition, parents reported 43.9% of the Classroom A students and 46.7% of the Classroom B students used note-taking strategies at least once/week to enhance comprehension during the reading process. These note-taking tools contributed to 50.0% of the students of Classroom A and 56.8% of the students in Classroom B sometimes making connections to other things they've read or heard about. Despite the fact that approximately one-half of the students involved in this study utilized this strategy sometimes, a third of the parents reported never observing their students making connections. This data confirms the teacher researchers' observations that some students will apply strategies while in guided settings; however, they remain reluctant to transfer and utilize the acquired skills independently. Other

possible explanations for the shift in parent statistics from the pre-study survey point to the parents' lack of familiarity with the concepts taught, obligations which detracted from time spent with their student, and in some cases, a language barrier that prevented communication regarding learning.

Considering Comprehension Teacher Survey- January 2007

Staff members who worked on the same team with each teacher researcher completed a post-study survey (Appendix Z), which asked them to reassess the use of reading in their classrooms at the conclusion of this study. Teachers rated the frequency of student use in regards to reading strategies based on the following scale: frequently (3), sometimes (2), and never (1). Of the reading strategies included on this survey, results illustrated that students either maintained the use of all the specified strategies or increased the frequency of application. This information supports the other post-study measurements which prove growth in the awareness and usage of reading strategies.

Holt Rinehart Winston Diagnostic Reading Assessment- January 2007

Each teacher researcher administered a reading comprehension diagnostic assessment appropriate for their grade level to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the readers at the culmination of the study. Once again, the text selections presented on the diagnostic assessment included both fictional and informational passages. All questions were designed to measure specific reading strategies. The strategies included: self-monitoring, visualizing, questioning, determining importance/main idea, making connections, inferring, and synthesizing.

In both Classrooms A and B, the post-assessment data reflects that students' reading comprehension improved throughout the study, as supported by an increase in correct responses on questions linked to all of the reading strategies. Coincidentally, these post-statistics

demonstrate growth in the same three strategies (self-monitoring, visualizing, and making

connections) for both Classrooms A and B.

Table 7

Top Three Areas of Growth on the Holt, Rinehart, Winston Reading Diagnostic Assessment

	Classroom A Response Increases	Classroom B Response Increases
Self-monitoring	3.2%	5.1%
Visualizing	4.9%	4.0%
Making Connections	3.8%	4.4%

The improvement in these areas can be explained by the fact that they require less intensive

thought patterns; thus, students' have prior experiences in working with these strategies.

Furthermore, the teacher researchers view these scores as proof that the interventions supplied to

the students (i.e. graphic organizers) encouraged a transfer to independent, and inherent, use of

the strategies.

Student scores demonstrated advancement in the areas of all reading strategies; however,

more minimal increases were in the areas of determining importance/main idea, inferring, and

synthesizing. Teacher researchers conclude that, due to the difficult nature of these strategies

and the need for higher-level thinking, students still need more experience in applying these

strategies independently.

Questions were classified into the following four categories: closed questions (questions

from which answers can be found directly stated in the text), open questions (answers can be

found within the text, but may require searching), complex questions (answers which require

inferential thinking), and Socratic questions (answers which demand prior knowledge to form

text-to-world connections). On the pre-assessment, students found most success with answering

the closed questions, as expected because the answers were readily available in the text.

However, on the post-assessment the greatest margin of increase was found in open questions in both Classrooms A and B.   This data supports that students ascended a level of questioning throughout the duration of the study. Teacher researchers acknowledge that the students made an expected progression through the four major types of questions. Complex and Socratic questions demand more sophisticated thinking and the application of inferring and synthesizing, both strategies which students remain less comfortable utilizing.

<div align="center">Conclusions and Recommendations</div>

Based on the student, parent, and teacher surveys, the Holt Rinehart Winston Reading Diagnostic assessment, and teacher researcher anecdotal records, the results revealed an overall improvement in reading comprehension. In addition, the results indicated that students understood the need to approach reading as a process in which they must apply the appropriate methods. With this realization, students applied reading comprehension strategies more regularly.

The teacher researchers found the reader's workshop framework a useful approach to measure student comprehension and provide differentiated instruction. However, the study proved in its results that this was only a single component; without the cooperation of content area teachers, students would not recognize the importance of transferring reading strategies to read text outside of the language arts classroom.

The researchers were discouraged to discover their colleagues' lack of follow-through, who initially appeared willing to integrate the terminology of reading strategies in their classrooms. Therefore, the teacher researchers recommend promoting the incentives of unified comprehension strategy application, in order to break down the barrier of resistance presented by teachers of different content areas. Additionally, the teacher researchers found themselves

frequently falling behind the weekly schedule outlined in the action plan, as students were not adequately prepared to process higher-level strategies. Hence, it would be advised that language arts teachers plan for additional time to transition from one strategy to another.

After witnessing resistance on the part of their advanced students early in the study, each teacher researcher believed that the initial step to achieve higher-level comprehension involved student awareness of their abilities as a reader. That being said, the teacher researchers also recognized that a quicker transition to the guided and independent phases of reader's workshop would be necessary should the study be conducted again.

In effect, based on the research conducted in this study, students' comprehension appeared to increase with the application of reading strategies when teacher-modeled and/or guided by graphic organizers. Furthermore, the importance of support from content area teachers would be essential to any studies conducted of this nature.

Reflection

This action research project provided an opportunity to explore educational issues worthy of inquiry and aided the teacher reserachers in maintaining their professional goal to update their methodologies and philosophies. The formation of the initial action research question allowed the teacher researchers to examine and analyze the problem at a national level.

In addition, this project presented important information, leading to a greater awareness in regards to classes, school, and district demographics and the impact of this data. Analysis of the three communities which fed into the site school, led the teacher researchers to recognize significant differences between each respective area. This data enhanced instructional methods. In retrospect, the action research process identified the problem within several different contexts: the seventh and eighth grade, district, and at a national level. Sharing the results and findings of

this research with fellow colleagues allowed the teacher researchers to earn respect and evolve into true educational professionals. As a result of this research, the researchers feel more confident and determined to assume roles as teacher leaders within their school and district community.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT READING COMPREHENSION ENTRANCE SURVEY

Reading Comprehension Entrance Survey
August 2006

Name: _____

Directions: Take some time to give me some background information about your comfort and experience with reading. The more honest your answers, the better I can address your needs and help you better comprehend what you read. Please take this survey seriously and work through it INDEPENDENTLY (i.e. there is no need for discussion with your peers). If you feel something is unclear or don't understand a question, just ASK me.

Part I. For each of the following genres, mark how frequently you read each type of literature (Frequently, Sometimes, Never).

	Frequently (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)
Newspapers			
Magazines			
Novels			
Websites			
Poems/song lyrics			
Plays			
Historical books			
Auto/biographies			
Comics			
Manuals/instructions			
E-mail/chat rooms			
Textbooks/assignments			

Part II. Please check the appropriate box based on the strategies you use when you read to help you better understand the text.

	Frequently (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)
1. I re-read something when I don't understand.			
2. I skim for main ideas and key phrases when I start a new chapter in a textbook.			
3. I read confusing phrases and sentences out loud.			
4. I have someone else read a passage to me when I'm confused.			
5. I try to figure out the author's purpose (e.g. entertain, persuade, inform)			

6. I make predictions about what may come next in my reading.			
7. I look for the author's main point, idea, or thesis.			
8. I ask myself "what do I already know?" (use prior knowledge)			
9. I make connections to other things I've read or events I've heard about.			
10. I try to figure out how the text is organized.			
11. I take notes, use post-its, and/or highlight for understanding when I read.			
12. I use my imagination to help me understand (e.g. webs, mental pictures)			
13. I understand better after trying to draw or map what I read.			
14. I can make a good guess about the meaning of an unknown word by making sense of what is being said in context.			
15. I study the title and pictures or photographs, and try to predict what the selection is about.			
16. I break new or difficult words into familiar chunks in order to pronounce the words properly.			
17. I think about movies, TV shows or books that might be similar to what I'm reading in some way.			
18. I discuss text with others (parents, friends, teacher) to clear up confusing parts.			
19. I ask myself questions about what I read.			
20. I think about why I am reading the selected text (i.e. "What am I supposed to get out of this?").			

Part III. Your opinion on the subject…
> Reflect on each of the following questions, then respond, and make sure to explain the **WHY.**

Self-evaluation of your ability as a reader: Mark where you believe you fall on the 1-10 scale below.

0	5	10
Struggling reader	Sometimes I understand, but certain types of text are more challenging	I understand almost everything I read

WHY did you place yourself at this spot on the number scale?

Check the statement below that best matches what you believe…

WHY you believe this statement is true?

APPENDIX B

PARENT READING COMPREHENSION ENTRANCE SURVEY

Reading Comprehension Entrance Survey
August 2006

Directions: Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. Your answers will be used to help increase student reading comprehension through the research study, *Improving Reading Comprehension through the Application and Transfer of Reading Strategies.* Please return this form by Monday, August 28, 2006. There is no need to include your name.

Part I.

	Never	Sometimes, but not every week	Once /week	2-3 times/week	More often than 2-3 times/week
Does your child read for pleasure?					
Does your child read magazines or the newspaper?					
Do you share information that you read with your child?					
How much time does your child spend reading on his/her own? (Something NOT assigned as homework)					
How often does your child see other family members reading?					
Do you communicate with your child about what he/she is reading?					
Do you communicate with your child regarding his/her comfort with reading?					

Part II.

	No	Yes
Do you encourage your student to finish a book that he/she has started?		
Do you believe that your child has difficulty reading and comprehending?		
Has your student shared any ways they have learned to improve their reading comprehension with you?		

APPENDIX C

CONSIDERING COMPREHENSION TEACHER SURVEY

**Considering Comprehension
Teacher Survey
August 2006**

Directions: Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. Your answers will be used to determine classroom practices in all areas and the materials used to help students learn. Your feedback will help to increase student reading comprehension through the research study, *Improving Reading Comprehension through the Application and Transfer of Reading Strategies.*

Part I.

	Never	Sometimes, but not every week	Once /week	2-3 times/week	More often than 2-3 times/week
Does your content area require in-class reading?					
Does your content area require out-of-class reading?					
Do you devote time in class for silent student reading?					
Are content materials in your classroom on different grade levels for meeting various needs of students?					
Is support present for struggling readers and writers in your classroom?					
How often do you engage students as active partners in learning?					

Part II.

What seems to be the most obvious reading problem(s) of your students in the past?

What do you think are the barriers to students' reading comprehension success?

Part III.

In my observations, students...	Frequently (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)
Re-read something when they don't understand.			
Skim for main ideas and key phrases when they start a new chapter in the textbook.			
Look for the author's main point, idea, or thesis.			
Make connections to other things they have read or events heard about.			
Try to figure out how the text is organized.			
Take notes, use post-its, and/or highlight for understanding when they read.			
Study the title and pictures or photographs, and try to predict what the selection is about.			
Discuss text/ask questions with others (parents, friends, teacher) to clear up confusing parts.			

Thank you for your feedback and participation!!!

APPENDIX D

READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES POWERPOINT OVERVIEW

Reading Comprehension Strategies

What are the "BIG 8" Reading Strategies?

- **Prior/Background Knowledge**
- **Self-Monitoring**
- **Questioning**
- **Visualizing**
- **Determining Importance/ Main Idea**
- **Making Connections**
- **Inferring**
- **Synthesizing**

How will the strategies help?

- Improve reading comprehension
- Make the text more meaningful
- Improve understanding in content area classes (like Science and Social Studies)

Prior/Background Knowledge

- **What do you already know about the topic?**

- **This will help you to make connections between new information and existing knowledge.**

Self-Monitoring
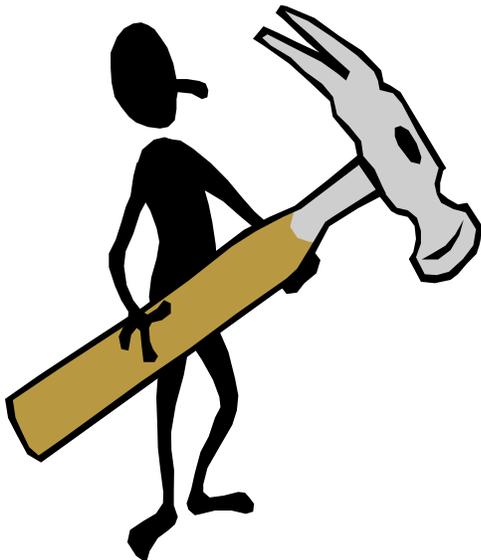
Knowing when to adjust your reading rate and reading strategies to understand different kinds of texts

Forming questions that will help keep you engaged, clarify confusion, stimulate research efforts, and promote deeper thinking about text

Visualizing

Creating mental pictures that strengthen inferential thinking

Determining Importance/Main Idea

Identify key ideas central to text meaning
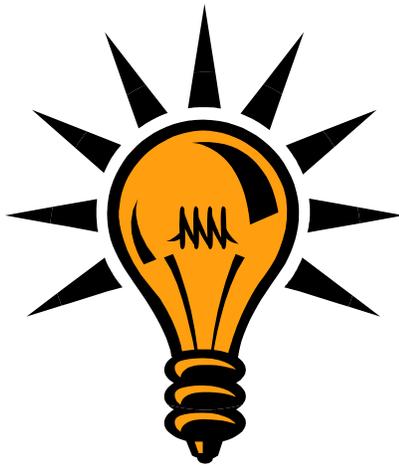
Making Connections

Thinking about connections formed between the text, other stories read, and/or the world
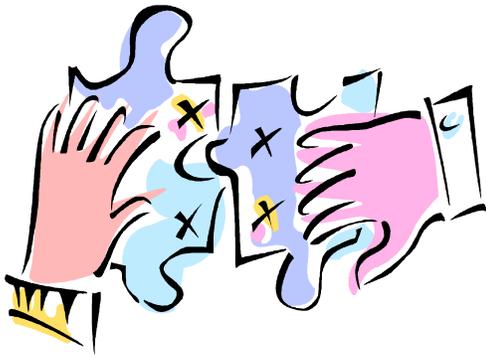
Inferring

Combining prior knowledge with textual information to interpret the text

Synthesizing

Use multiple strategies to find meaning of text

APPENDIX E

READING STRATEGY OVERVIEW GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Reading Comprehension Strategies

What is the difference between reading and comprehending?

Reading =

_____

Comprehending =

_____

How can we strengthen our reading comprehension?
   ✩ Try to use "THE BIG 8" strategies BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER reading!!

	The "BIG 8" Reading Comprehension Strategies	
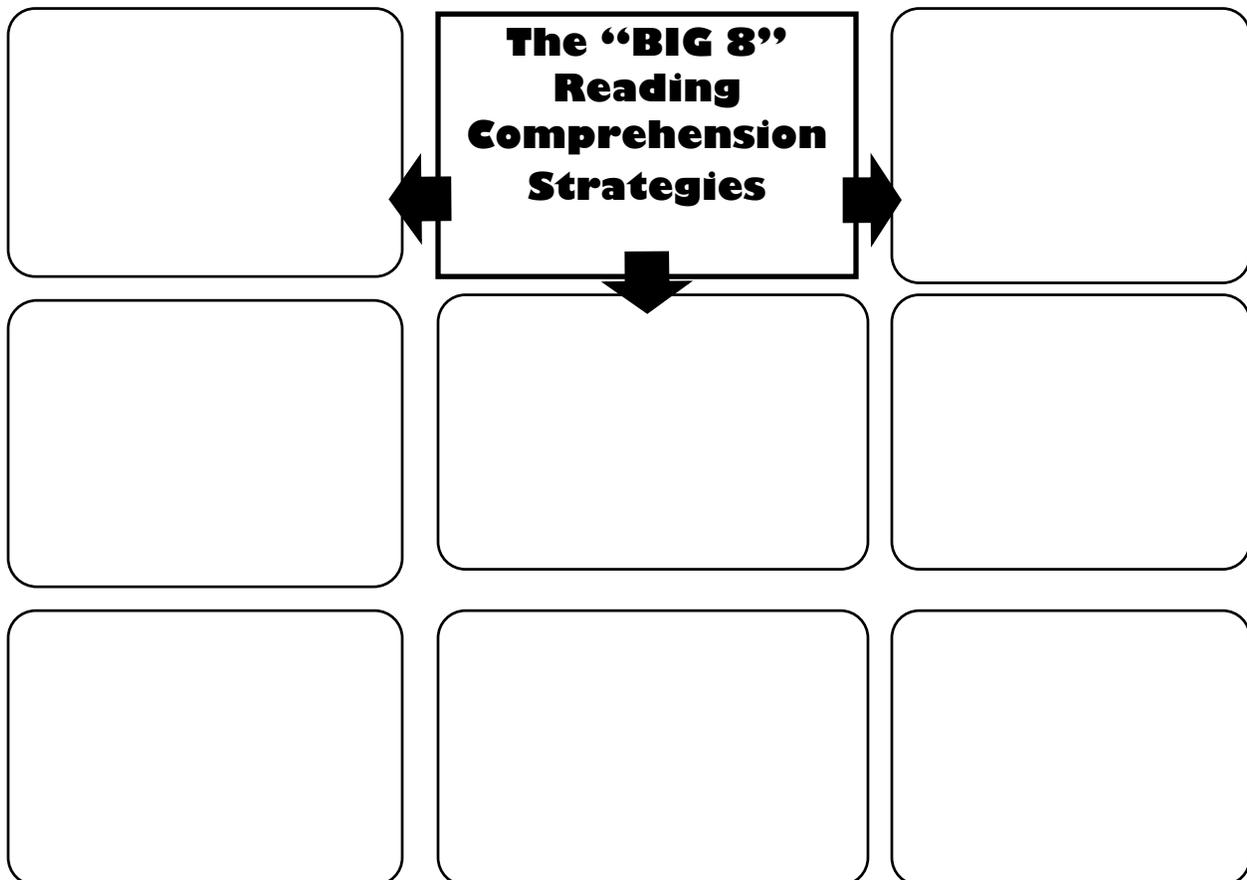
How will the "BIG 8" Help???

📖 _____

📖 _____

📖 _____

How can we strengthen our reading comprehension?
⌑ Try to use these strategies BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER reading!!

When do I use each strategy??		
BEFORE READING TRY..	DURING (WHILE) READING TRY...	AFTER READING TRY...

APPENDIX F

SELF-MONITORING STEPS AND FLOW CHART

SELF-MONITORING STEPS...

(adapted from Scholastic.com)

1 Read a passage of text.

→

2 <u>Determine at what points you will pause to ask yourself</u>:

Does this make sense?

Can I retell important parts of the last paragraph or page?

Can I summarize what I read in my own words?

Are my predictions correct, or do I need to change them?

↓

3 If you can answer **YES**, great; continue reading (back to #1)! If **NO**, continue to #4.

←

4 **Ask**: When did the reading become confusing? When did I "zone out"?

↓

5

Identify the area of difficulty:	Use an appropriate fix-up strategy:
Did I...run into difficulty with vocabulary (words)?	📖 Skip the word and read to the end of the sentence or segment, trying to use other words to help you figure it out. 📖 Guess the meaning or substitute a word that seems to fit and see if it makes sense.
Did I...stop concentrating?	📖 Reread the segment. 📖 Read aloud—it can really help to hear the text.
Did I...read it too fast?	📖 Slow down and reread, or read aloud.
Did I...lose the overall meaning of the text (or not understand how it relates to what I already read?)	📖 Break down the confusing segment with what came before or what comes afterward.
Did I...not understand the topic of my reading?	📖 Identify the topic and try to connect it to prior knowledge. What do you know about a similar topic that might help you?
Did I...lose a mental picture (the movie in my mind)?	📖 Try to create a picture in your head of what is going on or try mapping the plot/details on paper.
Did I...try to use a strategy that didn't work? Not know which strategy to try?	📖 Read on and see if the confusion clears up. 📖 **IF STILL CONFUSED, try another strategy, or mark/highlight the section and ask for help.**

APPENDIX G

SELF-MONITORING T-CHART~CLASSROOM A

Literature-Self-monitoring Strategy   Name: _____

                                            Block: _____ Date: _____

Directions: As you read your text selection, be sure to monitor your comprehension of the text. Fill out the t-chart below as you stop to assess your understanding; we will share the challenging parts of the text and your selection of "fix-up" strategies when we return to whole group

A confusing part of the text was…	Fix-up Strategy Used...

APPENDIX H

SELF-MONITORING T-CHART~CLASSROOM B

Name: _____
Lit/LA

Tracking Your Thoughts...
"Broken Chain"

Directions: Reading is an INTERACTIVE process; it truly is exercise for the brain! While reading, good readers process so many thoughts that they may not even realize when they are making predictions, questioning, and answering. In the organizer provided below, track AT LEAST SIX reading strategies that you use while reading "Broken Chain." Use the following key to code your thoughts (see the example in the organizer if you're still confused).

V= visualize	P= prediction	?= question
C= connection	R= re-read	I= Inferring
	**= New word/confusing passage	

Pg. #	Reading Strategy Used :	What I'm thinking...
p. 17	P and ?	Based on the title, the picture of the bike faded into the background and the picture of the boys, I think this story will involve a boy and his broken bike. The word "broken" also leads me to believe that disappointment may occur within the story. However, the picture of the boys smiling tells me something different. Their smiles indicate happiness rather than sadness/upset. I wonder if the mood of the story will be one of delight or sadness/conflict?

Pg. #	Reading Strategy Used:	What I'm thinking...

APPENDIX I

VISUALIZING GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Name:_____

Lit/LA

Visualization:

Making a Movie in your Mind!

"Proficient readers spontaneously and purposely create mental images while and after they read. The images emerge from all five senses as well as the emotions and are anchored in a reader's prior knowledge."

-- Keene and Zimmerman, Mosaic of Thought

<u>What is visualization?</u>

<u>Why should we try to visualize (make a movie in our mind)?</u>

- ⌘ Mental images surface from all _____, as well as _____, and are connected to a reader's _____ knowledge.

- ⌘ Students depend on _____ to create mental images. The details help students become engaged and make meaning of the text.

To practice "making a movie in our mind", we are going to use a Guided Imagery exercise. In order for this to work effectively, you need to listen carefully and follow my directions.

★*To "make a movie in your mind", you need to have an "open-mind"!*

Illustrate your visualization to the best of your ability:

Describe your visualization below (remember...details are key!):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX J

VISUALIZING JIGSAW ACTIVITY

Doodle Splash Jigsaw   Name: _____
Advanced Literature   Date: _____

Doodle Splash–
Making meaning by sketching

Have you ever heard the expression "a picture is worth a thousand words"?? In the case of visualizing, this is quite true. In this lesson, you are going to turn the author's words into pictures, symbols, or doodles.

Piece I:

1.) You will be selecting a short story to read independently.

2.) While you are reading, you will keep a visual journal. In other words, you will be doodling (yes, for once you can do this without getting called on it☺!)...drawing pictures, shapes, symbols, and thinking about color.

3.) Cover your page with doodles. Use as few or as many as you wish. Just be sure you cover all the elements of the short story (setting, plot, character, point of view, theme).

4.) After you finish reading and journaling, look over your journal doodle and see if there are any doodles you wish to add or change.

Piece II:

1.) You will get into a group with the other students who have read the same short story you have (*I will help get you organized and make any necessary adjustments*).

2.) Assign cooperative group roles (Recorder/Doodler, Reporter, materials manager, timer/encourager).

3.) Share your journals in the groups; make sure to explain your doodles and use the visuals to help discuss the plot of the story.

4.) Decide which doodles from the journals would best tell your story to the rest of the class. *Remember, some peers haven't read your story.*

5.) Using the paper and markers provided, create your Doodle Splash, artistically and logically arranging your doodles on the paper.

Be sure to use dark, bright colors and make the doodles large enough to be seen from a bulletin board or the wall.

6.) Place the title of your short story and the author's name somewhere on your Doodle Splash.

Piece 3: Presenting and Discussing Doodle Splashes

1.) When your group is called upon, go to the front of the class and present your Splash, explaining how your chosen doodles tell your story.

2.) Be sure that you cover all of the elements of the short story in your presentation, paying special attention to the conflict (and type– e.g. external, internal) and theme.

3.) While other groups are presenting, pay close attention (maybe even doodle about their story!!).

4.) When all groups have presented, you will be expected to take part in a class discussion, comparing and contrasting the different stories. Use the doodle notes you took during the presentations to help you in discussion.

You may select one of the following three stories...however, we need each story to be read by at least 4 people...so we will have two groups doodling the same story.

Short Story Selections:

A.) There Will Come Soft Rains (p. 265)
   A science fiction story set in California in 2026. Although technological marvels have become routine for the McClellan's family...will technology prevail?

B.) The Flying Machine (p. 303)
   A fairy-tale-like story that takes place in ancient china and uses Emperor Yuan to warn people about dangers in the world around them.

C.) The Fog Horn (p. 319)
   A suspense story that questions how similar monsters are to human beings. Do we see ourselves in the monster, and the monster in us?

APPENDIX K

IDENTIFYING FOUR TYPES OF QUETIONS

Name:_____
Lit/LA

Questions...open the door to understanding!

Questions...are at the heart of teaching and learning!

~**Stephanie Harvey**

Readers ask questions _____,
_____, **and** _____ **reading.**

READERS ASK QUESTIONS TO:

? _____

? _____

? _____

? _____

? _____

? _____

? _____

? _____

? _____

QUESTIONING

QUESTION CATEGORY:	PURPOSE:	EXAMPLES:
CLOSED ?'S- (A.K.A.~ Right there ?s)		
OPEN ?'S (A.K.A.~ Think/Search ?S)		

QUESTION CATEGORY:	PURPOSE:	EXAMPLES:
COMPLEX ?'S (A.K.A.~ On My Own ?S)		
SOCRATIC ?'S (A.K.A.~ Writer/Me ?S)		

APPENDIX L

DETERMINING IMPORTANCE IN FICTIONAL TEXT

Literature: Name_____
Finding Theme/Impt. Ideas in Fictional Text   Date: _____

THEME

> *By definition, it is*:
>
> 1.) A _____ about our lives
>
> 2.) A discovery of a _____ about the human experience
>
> 3.) An underlying (or hidden) idea, m_____, and/or lesson that gives the story its d_____ and meaning.

How to search for theme... look for the BIG ideas!!!

✷ Look for repeated words and _____ (recycled) themes!!

✷ **Examine what the writer is saying. Consider these questions**:

> **?** How has the main **character** changed over the course of the story? Is he/she _____ (stayed the same) or _____ (changed)? What has the character learned/discovered by stories end?
>
> **?** Which scenes or passages strike you as especially important to the story? WHY?
>
> **?** What is the **story's title**? Does it reveal anything about the story?
>
> **?** AFTER READING, ask yourself: what message is the writer trying to send? What is the **purpose of the text**?

✸   Stories tend to focus on the big topics in everyone's lives; *for example*:

      1.) _____

      2.) _____

      3.) _____

Common Themes~

THEME:	Where we've seen it/heard it before…(Examples)
#1~	
#2~	
#3~	
#4-	

APPENDIX M

INFORMATIONAL TEXT FEATURE ORGANIZER

Lit.

Determining Importance
The Nonfiction Connection

What is Nonfiction (A.K.A. Informational Text)? _____
_____

What are the Nonfiction Features that Signal Importance?

Nonfiction Feature	Examples
Fonts and Effects	
Cue Words and Phrases	
Illustrations and Photographs	
Graphics	
Text Organizers	
Text Structures	

APPENDIX N

INFORMATIONAL TEXT STRUCTURE ORGANIZER

Literature   Name: _____

Different Text Structures- Informational Text

Text Structure	Description	Signal words
Description/List Structure	Example:	
Cause & Effect Structure	Example:	
Compare/Contrast Structure	Example:	
Order/Sequence Structure 1900 1950	Example:	
Question/Answer Structure	Example:	

Problem/Solution Structure	Example:	

APPENDIX O

ADVANCED LANGUAGE ARTS INFORMATIONAL TEXT PROJECT

Name:_____   Advanced Lit/LA

Hitler's Youth... Another Point of View

> *I begin with the young. We older pones are used up... But my magnificent youngsters!*
> *Look at these men and boys! What material! With them, I can create a new world.*
>
>   —Adolf Hitler

Imagine you and your partner are journalists on an assignment to create a documentary on the effects of the Nazi genocide...except with a twist...reporting from the perspective of Hitler's Youth. Now that we have read and discussed various texts that seem to take on the point of view of Hitler's victims, let's challenge our thinking and examine a text that provides some perspective on those who followed Hitler's teaching and why. Instead of reading the entire piece, Hitler's Youth, each of you will be
assigned a partner to work with and a section of the text to read and analyze.

As you work, keep in mind the essential question~"Do you believe that most people are good at heart?" Try to find a way to integrate this theme into your "documentary".

You will be given TWO literature class periods to read and discuss the information, then decide on how you will present your section of the text and prepare.

Assigned Section: _____

Here is the schedule you need to follow to stay on track~

Day 1	Friday,10.06.06	Arrange groups, get organized, ask questions, read and discuss passage with group
Day 2	Tuesday,10.10.06	Determine key information to present, decide on how to present and prepare
Day 3	Weds.,10.11.06	Present Documentary

Groups:

Chapter1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9	Chapter 10
Jaclyn Cara	Lauren Sara	Brian Shawn	Kim Jessica	Mark Steven	Andrew Alex	Alyssa Allison	Dan Jimmy	Jon Mit	Megan Melissa

Rubric:

READING SKILLS (Infer main idea/theme; evaluate & draw conclusions from written text and text features)	10	8	6	4	2	0
FOCUS (Documentary displays creative thinking with effective opening & closing)	10	8	6	4	2	0
SUPPORT/ELABORATION (Provide sufficient support for main idea/theme; elaborate & interpret details)	10	8	6	4	2	0
SPEAKING/LISTENING (Presents w/ poise, Speech is clear and in a knowledgeable voice, eye contact is maintained)	10	8	6	4	2	0

● ●

Pesa's Presentation Pointers~

- ☞ Take on the role of a reporter~be creative!!!!!!!
- ☞ Make consistent eye contact with everyone in your audience (not just me)
- ☞ Avoid fidgeting, laughing and leaning
- ☞ Avoiding speaking too quickly and/or quietly

APPENDIX P

MAKING CONNECTIONS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Name:_____
Lit/LA

Making Connections

A BRIDGE FROM THE NEW TO THE KNOWN

Making Connections means…

So, you must use your _____ _____ and past
_____ to better understand what you are reading.

Three types of connections:

Text-Self:

_____

Text-Text:

_____

Text-World:

_____

*NOTE: Some connections cross boundaries and could be considered more than
one type of connection

OUR GOAL=TO MAKE MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS!!

What does this mean?

Now that we have read several selections in our unit entitled, The Human Spirit, let's try to
make text-text connections and think about how the main ideas and/or themes of the
selections tie into one another. (Hint: Even think about why this unit is called The Human
Spirit.)

In groups of THREE, your task is to try to create solid **text-text** connections using multiple examples from various readings from the unit.   <u>BE SPECIFIC</u> (try to provide page numbers)! Note your connections in the box below. Be prepared to share connections and examples with the class.
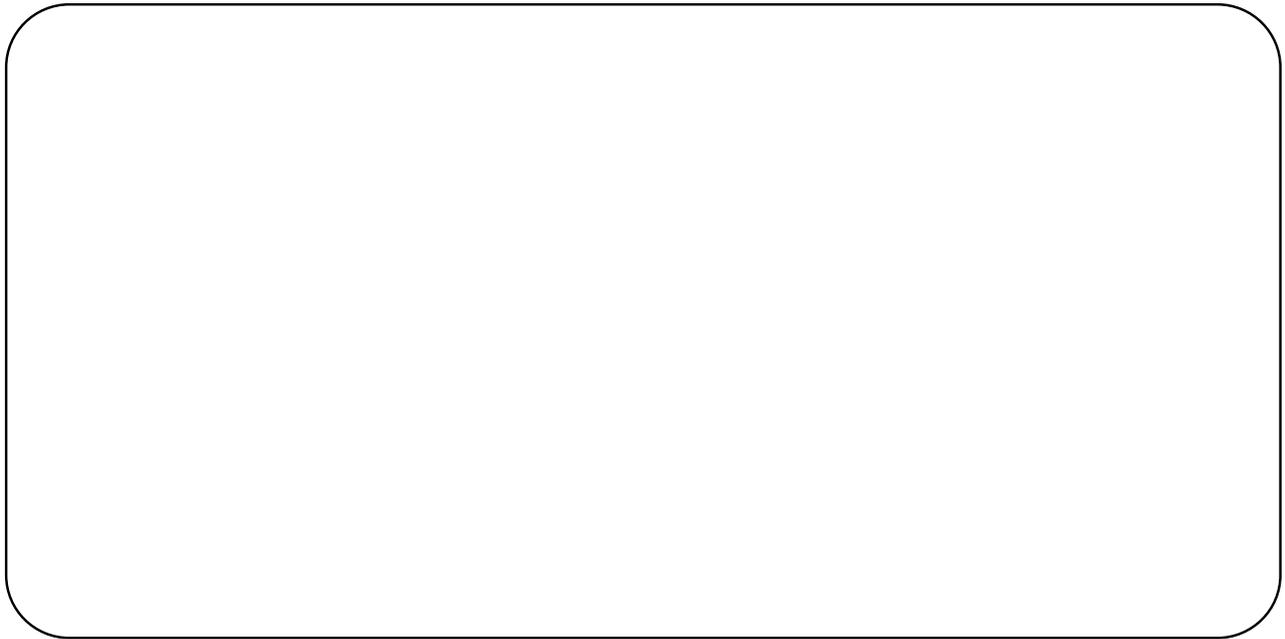
Now try to challenge your thinking even more...how about **text-world** connections? Think about the themes we've discussed in these selections...can any apply today? How/Why?
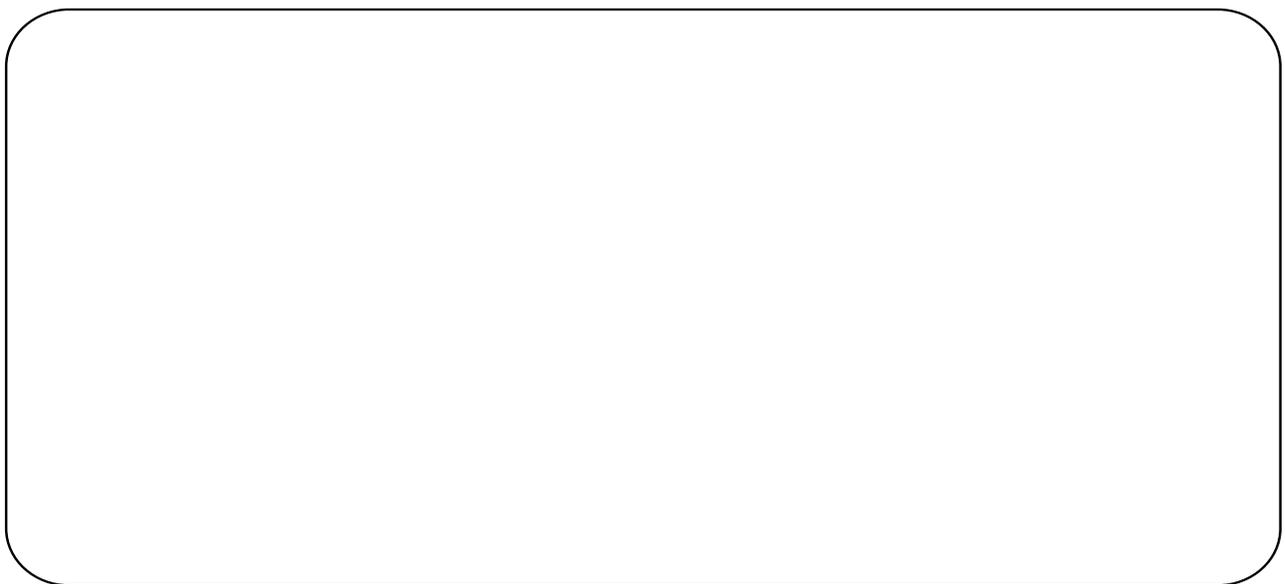
APPENDIX Q

INFERRING GUIDED NOTES ORGANIZER

Name:_____

Literature: Notes

Inferring

"Putting 2 and 2 Together"

What are Inferences?

How is an inference DIFFERENT from a prediction??

How do you make inferences?

_____ + _____= _____

Step 1: What you read... (TEXT)

Step 2: What you know... (PRIOR/BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE)

Step 3: Inference...

Let's Practice ~ Together:

What you read...

+

What you know...

=

Inference...

Let's Practice ~ On Your Own:

What you read...

+

What you know...

=

Inference...

APPENDIX R

IT SAYS-I SAY-AND SO GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Reading Comprehension Strategies– Inferring

Name: _____

Block: _____ Date: _____

It Says...I Say...And So...

Higher-level thinking question (Complex/Socratic):	It Says (Textual evidence)	I Say (prior knowledge)	And So...(My inference)
1. Pg. 53- Why doesn't Jeffrey want to be called by his nickname, 'Maniac"?	• He was afraid of losing his name...the only thing he had left from his father and mother	I know that Jeffrey has a lot of times in the book where he is worried about belonging and who he is.I know it can be annoying to get called something by friends without being asked first.	Jeffrey wants to hold onto the one gift his parents gave him, his name. Also, he wants to be known as someone with a REAL name and identity, not just some "maniac" kid.
2. Pg. 56- What does the narrator mean when he states, "Everything did not love him back" ?			

3. pg. 57 & 58- Why can't Maniac see the difference between "color"/ different races?			
Higher-level thinking question (Complex/Socratic):	**It Says (Textual evidence)**	**I Say (prior knowledge)**	**And So...(My inference)**
4. Pg. 62- Why does the older man tell Jeffrey to go home? Why do you think younger people don't care that Jeffrey is on the East End, but some adults do?			
5. Pg. 86- Why does Grayson (the old man at the zoo) have a puzzled look on his face when Jeffrey tells him "not if they don't find me" ?			
6. Your group's turn...create a question that requires you to "Read between the lines" and make an inference....			

APPENDIX S

INFERRING EXIT SLIP

Inferring Exit Slip

Name: _____

Block: _____ Date: _____

Your ticket out of Rm. 109...

1. We make inferences all the time in our daily lives. Inferring is all about reading faces, body language, expressions, and tone. It is to EVERYONE's benefit to become skilled at making inferences....chances are your inferring skills will save you A TON of grief! *Below, list 2 ways you make inferences in real life situations*...

2. How is an inference different from a prediction?

APPENDIX T

SYNTHESIZING INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Name:_____
Lit: Notes

Synthesizing Information: The Evolution of Thought

⇒ Synthesizing = _____ _____ **+** _____ _____
to form an original idea, new way of thinking, or new creation.

⇒ Synthesizing can be compared to a _____. Students must
arrange pieces of information until they see a new pattern emerge.

⇒ Synthesizing allows readers to _____ their _____.

⇒ In order to synthesize what they read, readers need to _____ every now
and then, _____ about what they read, and make _____ before
continuing on through the text.

⇒ When readers synthesize, they

✧ _____ and _____ their thoughts before reading on

✧ Determine _____ ideas from less importance ones (This sounds
like _____)

✧ _____ the info by briefly identifying the main points

✧ Make _____ or
_____
about the info they read

✧ _____ their reading by integrating new infromation with
_____ _____ to form a new idea, opinion, or
perspective

Stem statements & Questions to think about when asked to synthesize information

⌘ Now I understand that …

⌘ This gives me an idea…

⌘ This compared to …

⌘ This was different from …

⌘ Can you select 3 or 4 key events/ideas from the text and retell/summarize them in your own words?

⌘ Determining the purpose of a chapter or a book?

⌘ Can you separate the literal information about the character from the conclusions you drew?

⌘ Can you give several effects of a decision in the text or in the world?

Remember…SYNTHESIZING means combining <u>new ideas</u> with what you <u>already know</u> to form a new and different idea!

…it's like putting together all the pieces of a puzzle
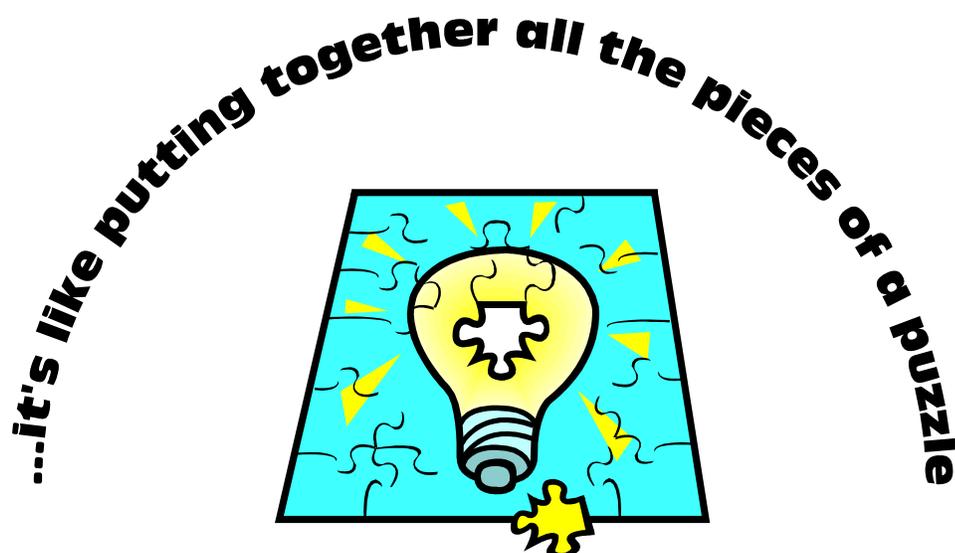
APPENDIX U

SYNTHESIZING INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Lit.– Classwork

Name: _____

Block: _____ Date: _____

Synthesizing... piecing together strategies to comprehend text

As I read aloud *See the Ocean*, record certain parts of the text which lead you to use one of the "BIG 8" comprehension strategies. Challenge yourself to use a variety of the strategies, and see how many you apply during the reading. Make sure to complete the final column, which explains *HOW* that particular strategy helps you understand the story better.

(*Record AT LEAST 3 entries)

Word/phrase that prompted you to use a strategy...	Strategy used:	How it helps you to better comprehend the text...
Example: "When she was a baby...She never cried when the saltwater stung her eyes or when sand got in her mouth"	QUESTIONING-Why wouldn't a baby be frightened or cry when a wave washed over her??	Asking this open question helps me clarify that this baby is not scared of the ocean; makes me want to read on to find out why this is so...

Word/phrase that prompted you to use a strategy...	Strategy used:	How it helps you to better comprehend the text...

After discussing and reviewing the strategies we used as a class, use the space below to write a reflection (3-4 COMPLETE sentences) on Nellie's character and her "ocean". Use the entries you made to help you respond. If you're stuck or need some further direction, consider the following questions:

? Why would the author write this story/what is the intended theme?

? If you could, would you change the ending of this story? Why?

? What comprehension strategies were most helpful as you tried to make meaning of this story? Why?

APPENDIX V

SYNTHESIZING IDEAS IN INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Name:_____
Lit: Assignments

Synthesizing Ideas in Informational Text

Directions: To practice synthesizing, each of you will be responsible for selecting a piece of informational text and applying the various reading strategies we've discussed this year in order to make meaning of the text. You will work in your readers workshop groups for support, although each of you may be reading a different text/article.

Once you have read the text and taken note of key ideas and strategies used...hopefully you will find new meaning in the text! You will have today and tomorrow to work on the text. You will share your article and ideas with your group on **Thursday.**

Group A & B Reading Choices:
Ships of Shadows
People of the 20th Century
Olympic Games

Group C & D Reading Choices:
Greg Mendel's Genetic Theory
The Supreme Court
Breaking the Code
Extreme Rocket Flight

✱Don't forget to use your before reading strategies...check out the title and text features to help you predict what the text will be about.

✱✱✱Hint: Remember this is informational text...so use the text features and structure to help you determine important ideas!

Use the organizer provided on the back side to note of the strategies that helped you to synthesize the ideas and find new meaning!

Homework= continue working on text & be ready to share with your group on Thursday!!!

WORD, PHRASE, OR FEATURE THAT PROMPTED YOU TO USE A STRATEGY…	STRATEGY USED:	HOW IT HELPS YOU TO BETTER COMPREHEND THE TEXT &/OR POSSIBLE RESPONSE
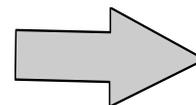
Now that you have applied various strategies to the text…what conclusions can you draw?

<u>If your stuck…think about the following ideas…</u>

⇒ Now I understand that …
⇒ This gives me an idea…
⇒ This compared to …
⇒ This was different from …
⇒ Can you select 3 or 4 key events/ideas from the text and retell/summarize them in your own words?
⇒ Determining the purpose of a chapter or a book?
⇒ Can you separate the literal information about the character from the conclusions you drew?
⇒ Can you give several effects of a decision in the text or in the world?

APPENDIX W

ADVANCED LANGUAGE ARTS "VOICES" ACTIVITY

Name:_____   SYNTHESIZING
Advanced Literature

VOICES IN THE PARK
Do you Hear What I Hear?

DIRECTIONS: To practice synthesizing ideas in a text, we are going to break into cooperative groups (see readers workshop groups posted on chalkboard) and analyze the voices in the text, *Voices in the Park*. Each group will be responsible for analyzing a voice. (Hint: think about how you can apply the other reading strategies we've discussed this year and the meaning you can make out of the text).

Each group will present their analysis/interpretation of the text by explaining the strategies & answers they found. In addition, the group will need to turn in ONE completed graphic organizer that outlines the strategies and meaning discussed. This organizer will be taken as a grade!

ROLES (ACCORDING TO HEIGHT TALLEST TO SHORTEST):

Materials Manager➔overhead transparencies, pen/pencil, voice assignment for group

Task Master X 2➔keep your group on task, watch the clock, encourage your team to keep moving ahead, support your team when "times get tough"!

Recorder X 2➔take notes on the graphic organizer that outlines strategies & meaning/analysis

Reporter X 5➔EVERY group member is responsible for presenting ideas, sharing findings with the class, & field questions from the class and me

DAY 1	MONDAY1 1.27.06	Arrange groups, get organized, ask questions, read and begin discussing text with the group
DAY 2	TUES.11.28 .06	Continue reading, applying strategies, discussing, and making meaning of the text
DAY 3 **If needed	WEDS.11.2 9.06	Determine key information to present, decide on how to share ideas and prepare

DAY 4	THURS.11. 30.06	Present ideas to the class in large group

RUBRIC (This will be used to assess the presentation and completed graphic organizer):

READING SKILLS (Evaluate & draw conclusions from written text and text features)	10	8	6	4	2	0
READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES (Evidence of multiple strategies applied to text, attempt to support/answer strategy used, explain how strategy helped to analyze the text)	10	8	6	4	2	0
SPEAKING/LISTENING (Presents w/ poise, Speech is clear and in a knowledgeable voice, eye contact is maintained)	10	8	6	4	2	0

REMEMBER...
PRESENTATION POINTERS~

- ✍ **Make consistent eye contact with everyone in your audience (not just me)**
- ✍ **Avoid fidgeting, laughing and leaning**
- ✍ **Avoiding speaking too quickly and/or quietly**
- ✍ **EVERYONE takes their turn to share ideas**

WORD, PHRASE, OR IMAGE THAT PROMPTED YOU TO USE A STRATEGY...	STRATEGY USED:	HOW IT HELPS YOU TO BETTER COMPREHEND THE TEXT &/OR POSSIBLE RESPONSE
Example: image of lady appears to be a gorilla	QUESTIONING- Why is the woman represented as a gorilla?	Asking this complex question helps to set a purpose as I continue to read; makes me want to read on to find out why this is so...

WORD, PHRASE, OR IMAGE THAT PROMPTED YOU TO USE A STRATEGY…	STRATEGY USED:	HOW IT HELPS YOU TO BETTER COMPREHEND THE TEXT &/OR POSSIBLE RESPONSE

Now that you have applied various strategies to the text…what conclusions can you draw? What is the intended message/theme of the voice you analyzed?

APPENDIX X

STUDENT READING COMPREHENSION POST-SURVEY

Reading Comprehension Post-Survey January 2007

Name: _____

Directions: Take some time to think about what you learned and how your experience with reading has changed over the course of the research study. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. Your answers will be used to measure growth upon completion of the research study, *Improving Reading Comprehension through the Application and Transfer of Reading Strategies.* The more honest your answers, the better I can address your needs as we continue throughout the school year. Please take this survey seriously and work through it INDEPENDENTLY (i.e. there is no need for discussion with your peers). If you feel something is unclear or don't understand a question, just ASK me.

Part I. Please check the appropriate box based on the strategies you use when you read to help you better understand the text.

	Frequently (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)
1. I re-read something when I don't understand.			
2. I skim for main ideas and key phrases when I start a new chapter in a textbook.			
3. I read confusing phrases and sentences out loud.			
4. I have someone else read a passage to me when I'm confused.			
5. I try to figure out the author's purpose (e.g. entertain, persuade, inform)			
6. I make predictions about what may come next in my reading.			
7. I look for the author's main point, idea, or thesis.			
8. I ask myself "what do I already know?" (use prior knowledge)			

9. I make connections to other things I've read or events I've heard about.			
10. I try to figure out how the text is organized.			
11. I take notes, use post-its, and/or highlight for understanding when I read.			
12. I use my imagination to help me understand (e.g. webs, mental pictures)			
13. I understand better after trying to draw or map what I read.			
14. I can make a good guess about the meaning of an unknown word by making sense of what is being said in context.			
15. I study the title and pictures or photographs, and try to predict what the selection is about.			
16. I break new or difficult words into familiar chunks in order to pronounce the words properly.			
17. I think about movies, TV shows or books that might be similar to what I'm reading in some way.			
18. I discuss text with others (parents, friends, teacher) to clear up confusing parts.			
19. I ask myself questions about what I read.			
20. I think about why I am reading the selected text (i.e. "What am I supposed to get out of this?").			

Part II. Your opinion on the subject…
Reflect on each of the following questions, then respond, and make sure to Explain the WHY.

1. **Self-evaluation of your ability as a reader**: Mark where you believe you fall on the 1-10 scale below.

← →

0	5	10
1		
Struggling reader	Sometimes I understand, but certain types of text are more challenging	I understand almost everything I read

WHY did you place yourself at this spot on the number scale?

APPENDIX Y

PARENT READING COMPREHENSION POST-SURVEY

Reading Comprehension Post-Survey January 2007

Directions: Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. Your answers will be used to measure growth upon completion of the research study, *Improving Reading Comprehension through the Application and Transfer of Reading Strategies.* Please return this form by Tuesday, January 16, 2007.

Part I.

	No	Yes
Do you believe that your child has difficulty reading and comprehending?		
Do you believe your child's ability to work through comprehension problems have improved during the first half of the school year?		
Has your student shared any ways they have learned to improve their reading comprehension with you?		

Part II.

I have seen my student…	Frequently (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never(1)
Re-read something when they don't understand.			
Make connections to other things they have read or events heard about.			
Take notes, use post-its, and/or highlight for understanding when they read.			
Display a willingness to discuss text/ask questions with others to clear up confusing parts			

Thank you!!!

APPENDIX Z

CONSIDERING COMPREHENSION TEACHER SURVEY

Considering Comprehension Teacher Survey January 2007

Directions: Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

Part I.

At this point in the school year, what seems to be the most obvious reading problem(s) for your students?

Have you noticed an improvement in students' ability to work through these problems using reading strategies? How so?

Part II.

In my observations, students...	Frequently (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)
Re-read something when they don't understand.			
Skim for main ideas and key phrases when they start a new chapter in the textbook.			
Look for the author's main point, idea, or thesis.			
Make connections to other things they have read or events heard about.			
Try to figure out how the text is organized.			
Take notes, use post-its, and/or highlight for understanding when they read.			
Study the title and pictures or photographs, and try to predict what the selection is about.			
Discuss text/ask questions with others (parents, friends, teacher) to clear up confusing parts.			

Thank you for your feedback!!!