

Literacy Tips



Tips for middle school educators on various topics such as grammar, writing, reading, spelling, vocabulary, cooperative learning and more.

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Tip #26: Reading with Students

To, by, and with...

A couple of tips ago, I discussed the importance of students having time to read recreationally **by** themselves from self-selected books. Last week's email tip addressed the pedagogy behind reading aloud **to** students. This week's focus is reading **with** students. Just to warn you, I have no attachments with this tip. It is just good old fashioned rhetoric. Please indulge me.

Reading with students is the heart of the reading program. This shared reading is the purposeful time in your lesson plan where all students have a copy of the literature selection you are using for instruction. You have chosen the text in order to demonstrate *reading skills and strategies from the language arts standards. Your reading the text aloud impacts your instruction in several ways.

First, you can control the pace at which the lesson unfolds. For example, demonstrating how a reader makes predictions can be modeled by showing only parts of the text at a time. You can keep students from reading ahead by placing passages on the overhead projector and then using the students' texts for more practice.

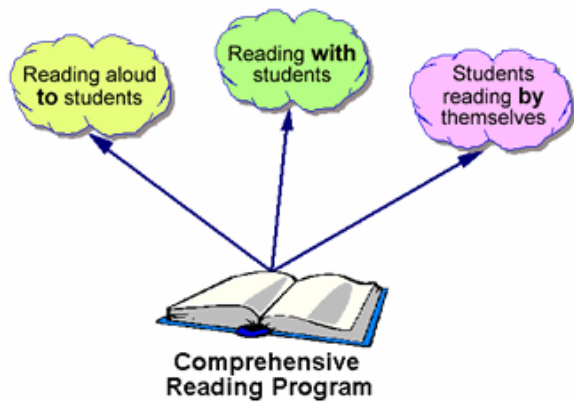
Reading aloud shared text is also a great way to model fluency. Many of our middle school students have not developed the speed (150 words a minute or more) to be proficient

readers. They need to be exposed to good reading a lot. You can use this time to model expression through the use of the author's punctuation. Remember to constantly remind students during shared reading to keep "eyes on text" or to carefully track along with you.

Finally, reading with students maximizes your ability to do "think alouds." You can demonstrate a reading skill or strategy in front of the whole class by thinking aloud as you go. Reading is a passive, receptive activity unlike written expression, so it is important to verbalize the process for students. Show them and tell them how you question as you read. Show them and tell them how you incorporate "fix-up" strategies when something doesn't make sense to you as you read. Show them and tell them what you are visualizing as you read. With reading shared text, you can gradually release the responsibility of learning. Students can try to apply the new skill or strategy you are modeling later in the class period and further along in the text as the lesson unfolds.

OK, I can't stand not even having a graphic organizer. I knew I wouldn't be able to resist the urge. Hopefully this will serve as a visual reminder for you. I couldn't get this any smaller, so be sure to scroll all the way down. I have a few comments below the graphic.





* What is the difference between a reading skill and a reading strategy? MaryEllen Vogt, vice-president of the International Reading Association, helped clarify this for me last week at her inservice with 6th grade teachers. (Because of limited subs available, I know that only some of you were able to attend using creative coverage at your site.)

Reading skills defined

“Skills are highly routinized, almost automatic behaviors generally associated with lower levels of thinking and learning. It is assumed the use of the skills will be unconscious; there is no monitoring and the reader is viewed as a passive receptor of information.” (Think of the student who can read a page of text beautifully out loud and then is not able to tell you one thing he/she has comprehended. This is a skillful student. This student has mastered decoding skills at an automatic level.)

Reading strategies defined

“Strategies are conscious, flexible plans a reader applies to a variety of texts. The use of strategies implies awareness, reflection, and interaction between the reader and the author. Strategies do not operate individually or sequentially, but are interrelated and recursive. The goal is the active construction of meaning and the ability to adapt strategies to varying

reading demands.” (Think of the student who struggles to read the words on the page aloud. He/she skips many, makes lots of miscues, but eventually finishes. When asked to retell the passage, this student can explain what has happened. Comprehension has occurred. He/she has relied on reading strategies to work through the decoding, which is clearly not yet at an automatic level.)

Of course, proficient readers need both skills and strategies. Being able to effectively evaluate students as readers will help determine the diagnostic path for instruction.

