



Academic Environment

9 STRATEGIES THAT FACILITATE READING COMPREHENSION

by Sandra L. Love, Ed.D.

9 Strategies that Facilitate Reading Comprehension with ELLs

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Director of Education Insight and Research at Mentoring Minds



Teaching reading comprehension and helping English language learners (ELLs) are the responsibilities of all teachers. The strategies for building content-specific reading comprehension help ELLs and any other learner become successful communicators.

- ▶ **Engage in student dialogue** to build positive relationships. Meaningful interactions help students become comfortable expressing ideas in a welcoming classroom environment.
- ▶ **Involve peer collaboration** before, during, or after reading content to build support for and extend the learning of ELLs.
- ▶ **Build background knowledge and make connections** prior to reading and after reading content. Invite students to work in pairs and complete KWL charts. Students identify what they 'know' about a topic, use Why/How/What prompts to form responses about what they 'want to know,' and record what they 'learned.'
- ▶ **Use graphic organizers or concept sorts** to help ELLs organize, verbalize, and make connections with what they have read. Students develop speaking and listening skills when they collaborate and complete organizers with classmates.
- ▶ **Use the Think Aloud strategy** to share thought processes that model how to approach reading text. Teachers can read aloud a selection and pause frequently to comment about the text in order to bring meaning, including highlighting key terms or interpreting phrases. Students can discuss what they observed and practice the strategy with their peers.
- ▶ **Employ Think-Pair-Share** after questions are asked about complex texts. ELLs can share their own ideas with partners, receive feedback, work through the meaning to expand ideas about the text, and practice what they want to say before sharing in large group formats.



Foster sticky-note discussions with an individual student, in a small group, or with the entire class. While reading a text, students use sticky notes to identify cause and effect, problem solution, events, main ideas, something liked, parts of speech, opinions, or other essential information. Students might even make brief comments on the notes. Afterwards, students review sticky notes and discuss and explain marked items.



Incorporate visual representations including video clips, photographs, or actual items to develop comprehension of vocabulary or concepts. Allow ELLs to illustrate responses to questions to demonstrate understanding (e.g., about terms, sequence of events, main ideas) and then partner with proficient English-speaking peers to garner support for writing descriptions.



Model how to summarize using about 10 key words. Demonstrate how to select important words from a reading passage and then use those words to write a two-sentence summary. Following the modeling, have students work as a class to practice writing the summary. Then, have students work in pairs, read another passage, highlight or select words, write a summary, and share. Repeat before asking students to work individually.

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