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How Do We Teach Reading as a Strategic, Decision-Making Process?

Valerie Ellery

The following activities, Detail/Retell and Collaborate and Elaborate, adapted from the new IRA book *Creating Strategic Readers* (second edition), highlight how two of the five essential reading components are used in a comprehensive literacy classroom to create strategic readers. The activities also demonstrate how to engage and motivate students and meet their diverse needs.

In the second edition of *Creating Strategic Readers*, Valerie Ellery describes a comprehensive literacy classroom, detailing appropriate curriculum, assessment, and instruction. She specifically focuses on embedding five essential and timeless reading components—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—their strategies, their techniques, and teacher talk into a comprehensive literacy approach. Following is a brief look at two of these components and techniques that support them.

Comprehension Strategy: Summarizing

Comprehension instruction incorporates various strategies such as predicting, questioning, and inferring. The following material, adapted from *Creating Strategic Readers*, provides a brief overview of the

comprehension strategy summarizing. Summarizing is a strategy that helps the reader identify and organize the essential information found within a text. Strategic readers summarize during reading by putting together information and focusing on the key elements of what they are reading. These key elements are brief and related to important ideas, events, details, structural clues, or other information that supports the reader in bringing meaning to the text. Students continually organize these key elements throughout their reading of a text while filtering out less significant details.

To make generalizations about a story rather than simply retell the specifics, strategic readers select important information after reading and bring together these ideas in their own words. Retelling allows students to recall story structure and gives them guidance as they discuss the setting, theme, plot episodes, resolution of conflicts, and sequence of events.

The following activity is meant for Emergent to Fluent readers and incorporates various multiple intelligences such as verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, and intrapersonal to engage and motivate students. The goals are to help students develop the ability to recount story details sequentially and develop the vocabulary specific to a story and its contents.

Detail/Retell

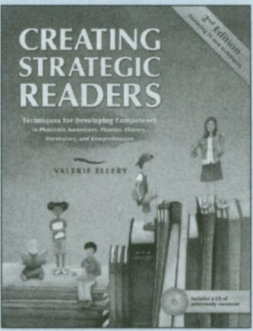
1. Discuss and practice with students ways they retell daily. With partners, have the students tell what they did either over the weekend, last night, on vacation, and so forth. Discuss how they may have used words like first, next, and then while they were retelling what they did to their partners.

2. Demonstrate retelling after you read a short text. Suggested teacher talk might be, “I am going to retell the story to you as if you never heard it before.” Remind them just like they told their partners about their weekend, or vacation, when you retell a story, you are providing the details of the story to create a mental image to the other person of all the story details.

3. To guide students with visual props use one of the following to increase their detail retells.

- Story glove—Write on a garden glove with a permanent marker thumb the terms characters (thumb), setting (pointer finger), problem (middle finger), events (ring finger) and ending (pinky finger). Use the glove as a visual reminder of the narrative story elements for a retell. Students can trace their hand and create a retell to share by drawing or writing the story elements on the fingers.
- Baseball mats—Create or purchase a 1st base, 2nd base, and 3rd base and have the students stand on each base and give their detail retell what happened first in the story, then what happened next in the story, and finally share how the story ended while standing on 3rd base. You can use the home plate for students to share the information from the detail retell to “bring the retell home” by selecting key pieces of information and creating a concise summary statement.
- Hula hoops—Place at least three different colored hula hoops on the floor before a read aloud. As you are reading, stand inside a hula hoop and move to the next hoop when there a transition in the text. When you have finished the section, step out of the hula hoops and ask the students what was happening when you were in the first red hoop, next in the green hoop, etc. This gives allows students with a more spatial awareness to follow the sequence of the story and supports their detail retell.
- Table of contents—Have the students use the table of contents as a review and an opportunity to guide them through a retell. Students read aloud the table of contents stopping on each entry and giving the details that were within that chapter.

These activities are excerpted from Valerie Ellery's new IRA publication *Creating Strategic Readers: Techniques for Developing Competency in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension* (second edition).



Find out more about this book online at www.reading.org.

Vocabulary Strategy: Contextualizing

Vocabulary instruction incorporates various strategies such as associating, categorizing, and analyzing. The following material, adapted from *Creating Strategic Readers*, provides a brief overview of the vocabulary strategy contextualizing. Students need many opportunities for developing a rich vocabulary through listening, speaking, reading, and writing in an integrated manner. Vocabulary instruction should be an integral component in a daily literacy block. Integrating vocabulary instruction provides students with numerous opportunities to manipulate and learn new vocabulary words. Incorporating vocabulary instruction throughout the content areas encourages students to make connections to new and already known information, discuss meanings of new words, and demonstrate and appropriately apply the new words, providing multiple re-exposures to the words. Encouraging students to think strategically when learning new words is essential. Vocabulary knowledge is cumulative and takes multiple exposures in a variety of meaningful contexts for words to be applicable and committed to long-term memory.

The following activity is meant for Fluent readers and incorporates various multiple intelligences such as verbal/linguistic, interpersonal, and visual/spatial to engage and motivate students. The goal is to have students explore, discuss, and formulate a definition that they perceive from clues within the context and

to then integrate the newly identified words into a working vocabulary.

Collaborate and Elaborate

1. Invite students to write unknown words or phrases they encounter in a vocabulary notebook.
2. Arrange students in groups to explore, discuss, and formulate a definition of the words or phrases that they perceive from clues within the sentence or related sentences.
3. Teams select a recorder to capture their examples and non-examples of the word from personal experiences and background knowledge, which helps to illustrate what the word is or is not, depending on the related words in context. Suggested teacher talk could be, "What clues are within the sentence that helped you figure out the word?"
4. The group agrees upon a definition that best describes the meaning of the word or phrases according to the related words and compares it with resources (i.e., dictionary, teacher, glossary).
5. Students continue to add new vocabulary words as they encounter them in their reading. Suggested teacher talk could be, "How have you used your new word in your written or oral presentation?"

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IRA Resources for School-Based Professional Development

If tight budgets are making you look for professional development options close to home, IRA has several suggestions:

- **This journal!** One of your benefits as an IRA member is the right to copy articles from your journal to share with colleagues for inservice PD at your school. We hope you'll find lots to discuss in this issue, and we welcome your feedback about how to make the journal even better for use in PD settings. (Contact us at publications@reading.org.)
- **New "PD editions" of leading IRA titles.** Packaged with a facilitator's guide and a CD of supplementary readings, reproducible forms, and other resources, these editions of *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction* and *Understanding and Using Reading Assessment*,

K-12 are prepared specially for PD facilitators to use in book study groups.

- **Book-video packages.** Reading and viewing together make for powerful learning. IRA offers several titles with optional video/DVD supplements, including the bestselling *Creating Strategic Readers* and *Small-Group Reading Instruction*. Other titles, such as *Speaking and Listening for Preschool Through Third Grade* and *In a Reading State of Mind*, offer DVDs packaged with the book.

Use these affordable resources to support your own professional development or in a school-based professional learning community. Find out more on the "School-Based Professional Development" webpage in the Publications area of www.reading.org.