



AFT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATION COURSE OVERVIEW

Course: Reading Comprehension Instruction

Summary

Reading Comprehension Instruction (RCI) is an ER&D module that focuses on the research and exemplary practices that help students acquire strong reading comprehension skills. RCI is appropriate for all K-12 teachers and support staff who need to help increase their students' comprehension of text – whether that text is a literature selection or a subject area textbook. The course provides participants with a synthesis of the research base on reading comprehension instruction and vocabulary development. Participants examine, discuss and evaluate the appropriate application of a range of instructional strategies from explicit to implicit teaching of comprehension skills. Strategies are presented for increasing student comprehension of both narrative and expository texts. In addition, participants learn how to help students self-monitor comprehension and apply appropriate “fix-up” strategies when comprehension is not achieved. Practice in using instructional strategies and examples of student work are embedded in the course.

The Reading Comprehension Instruction module was developed for AFT by reading researchers Janice Dole, Joanna Williams and Jean Osborn.

Course Content

A Schema-based Approach to Reading Comprehension Instruction

Text comprehension does not happen in a vacuum. It is influenced by several factors, including the reader's schemata and background knowledge. Research by Anderson; Beck, Perfetti & McKeown; Stanovich & Cunningham and others has affirmed the impact on comprehension of background knowledge and schema and the critical need for teachers to activate students' prior knowledge, build students' background knowledge and understand the role of schema in text comprehension. This section sets the context for the course.

Coherence and Structure

In this section of the course, participants learn that text can have different levels of coherence, become able to identify varying types of text coherence, and acquire strategies with which to scaffold students' understanding of that text. In addition, participants learn how to identify and understand the impact on comprehension of different text structures so that their teaching practice is more intentional and effective in facilitating students' comprehension, especially of expository text.

Narrative Text Comprehension

The focus of this section is to help participants identify types of narrative texts; learn the characteristics of that text; and learn and practice before, during and after reading instructional strategies to enhance students' comprehension of narrative text.

Strategy Instruction in Metacognition

Comprehension strategies can and should be taught to students. Proficient readers automatically discern when they don't understand text and/or when text doesn't make sense to them; these readers then choose and employ "fix-up" strategies. In this section of the module, participants become conscious of the role metacognitive awareness and comprehension strategies play in their own reading, and they learn how to teach students to become more metacognitively aware, strategic readers.

Expository Text Comprehension

Participants learn the types of expository text, characteristics of expository text, and how those characteristics contribute to or impede text comprehension. Participants acquire and practice before, during and after reading strategies used to improve students' comprehension of expository text.

Questioning the Author (QtA) and Reciprocal Teaching (RT)

Substantial time is spent teaching participants these two critical during reading instructional strategies. Participants have ample opportunity to practice these strategies in role plays.

Vocabulary Instruction

Vocabulary development is critical to text comprehension. This section focuses on how participants can be strategic in determining what words to teach and how, so that students come to "own" new words and increase the breadth and depth of their vocabulary.

Key Researchers

Schema, Background Knowledge: Anderson; Beck, Perfitti & McKeown; Stanovich & Cunningham; Bransford, and Langer

Coherence and Text Structure: Graesser et al.; Mandler & Johnson; Fitzgerald

Narrative Text Comprehension: Beck; Beck & McKeown

Expository Text Comprehension: Anderson & Armbruster; Meyer; Driscoll

Questioning the Author: Beck; Beck & McKeown

Reciprocal Teaching: Palincsar, Brown, David, Paris, Pearson, Vygotsky

Vocabulary Instruction: Beck; Biemiller; Beck, McKeown & Kucan; Stahl; Hart & Risley; Nagy, Herman & Anderson; Dole

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