



Constructing Meaning Through Kid-Friendly Comprehension Strategy Instruction

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Maupin House Publishing

Constructing Meaning uses easy, effective and innovative techniques to help students in grades 3-8 apply comprehension strategies as they read. It provides an instructional plan, models, examples of teacher-talk, lesson plan samples, and templates that help teachers explicitly teach comprehension strategies.

Constructing Meaning is a guide for teachers who want to improve reading comprehension for both fiction and informational text. This book provides teachers with the strategies and tools as well as the methods for effective assessment. Nancy N. Boyles is also the author of *Hands-On Literacy Coaching*, *Teaching Written Response to Text*, and *That's a Great Answer!*

About the Study Guide

This guide is designed to facilitate professional development in a collegial book study atmosphere. Four professional development sessions include discussion points, guiding questions, workshop activities, and classroom applications. To create a successful professional development experience, consider the following tips:

- Before you begin, seek input about teacher schedules and preferences. Try to arrange your professional development so that participants will be able to attend every session.
- Provide copies of *Constructing Meaning* for all participants. Meaningful application of the skills and activities discussed at each meeting depends upon access to the resource between meetings.
- Provide discussion questions ahead of time and encourage participants to become familiar with the material covered in each session prior to the meeting.
- Provide time between each meeting session to allow teachers the opportunity to apply the skills and be prepared to share their successes and challenges in implementation.
- At each meeting, allow for discussion before beginning the planned workshop activities. Teachers will gain understanding by articulating their successes and challenges faced when implementing the skills.

Session One

Introducing Comprehension Strategies Together for Better Understanding (Chapters 1-2)

- Helping Children Think about Thinking: Introducing Reading Comprehension Strategies Using Kid-Friendly Language
- Thinking Out Loud: Modeling Reading Comprehension Strategies

Guiding Quote:

“Teach the Reader, not the reading!” (page ix)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is metacognition? What are some metacognitive strategies?
2. How does a teacher explain the gradual release of responsibility?
3. Why is the think aloud an important strategy for teachers? How does it affect student learning?
4. When is the use of modeling appropriate in a lesson?

Workshop Activity:

Prior to the lesson: Photocopy page 20 for each participant.

1. Give each participant a copy of page 20. Allow the participants time to complete the questions, and then share ideas as a whole group. Ask participants if this activity would benefit their students? How?
2. Give participants time to read the text “The Life and Times of Lily: Memoir of a Mutt” found on page 22.
3. Follow the model lesson found on page 24. The facilitator will model think aloud strategies for the participants.
4. Create a chart that identifies the strengths of using the model and any barriers seen that could hinder effective implementation.
5. Discuss solutions to any concerns or questions the group may have regarding implementation.

Classroom Implementation:

Review the texts well suited for modeling Comprehension Strategies listed on pages 33-35. Encourage teachers to choose a book and plan a lesson to model the think aloud strategy. Plan for implementation of the model and gather materials needed. Survey the lesson ideas and activities and plan for instruction.

Looking Ahead:

Be prepared to discuss the challenges and successes of implementing the think aloud model. Encourage teachers to share ideas from their lessons at the next session to facilitate discussion.

Session Two

Introducing Comprehension Strategies Together for Better Understanding
(Chapters 3-4)

- Guided Student Practice: Using Comprehension Strategies in a Small Group
- Getting Past Mediocre Instruction

Guiding Quote:

“Student practice with reading strategies among peers in a small group helps students to value their own thinking strategies and that of their peers, and it leads to a successful transfer of responsibility for learning from teacher to student.”
(page 36)

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the benefits for students working in a small group?
2. What are some management techniques used by teachers to ensure the success of the small group?
3. What does the implementation of small group learning look like? What are the procedures?
4. What is the time frame for full implementation? What are the differences when working with ELL or struggling readers?

Workshop Activity:

1. Divide the participants into small groups. Have participants read the scenario on pages 63-65.
2. Have each group answer the questions about the teaching/learning scenario found on pages 65-68. Be sure to find evidence from the scenario to support the answers.
3. Share answers and ideas in the whole group. Encourage participants to discuss the challenges and concerns about using this strategy. Develop supports to help teachers effectively implement in their classrooms.

Classroom Implementation:

Survey the chapters and identify at least two strategies that will be implemented before the next session. Use the lesson ideas and activities to plan for instruction.

Looking Ahead:

Be prepared to discuss the challenges and successes of implementing think alouds and small group instruction. Encourage teachers to bring student samples, lessons, and suggestions to the next session to facilitate discussion.

Session Three

Embedding Comprehension Strategies During Shared, Guided and Independent Reading (Chapters 5-6)

- Applying Comprehension Strategies to Study Fiction
- Applying Comprehension Strategies in the Content Areas

Guiding Quote:

“Strategies for reading comprehension should be a natural part of studying literature, and the teaching of these strategies should be a central focus of your students’ literature studies.” (page 73)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the value of a year long literacy curriculum?
2. What are some of the ways to organize a literature study?
3. How can a teacher improve comprehension when using informational or content area text?
4. Why do students need support before, during, and after reading informational text?

Workshop Activity:

Prior to the lesson: Ask teachers to bring literature samples of both fiction and non-fiction text to this session. Teachers may refer to the bibliography for ideas.

1. Review the charts for studying literature strategically on pages 79-83.
2. Divide the participants into five groups. Have each group read and discuss one of the charts identifying key points and strategies. As a group, develop a plan for using one of the literature sources to teach a focus lesson.
3. Have each group report on their chart and share specific skills, lessons, or ideas that would be beneficial when implementing a lesson to teach the focus skill.
4. Instruct participants to turn to page 92. As a whole group, use an informational text to review the strategy chart. Compare using an informational text with a fiction text. What are the similarities and what are the challenges?

Classroom Implementation:

Encourage teachers to use comprehension strategies from these chapters to teach a focus skill. Plan and implement a lesson using a focus skill.

Looking Ahead:

Be prepared to discuss the successes and challenges of implementing this type of lesson. Encourage teachers to bring student samples or examples to the next session to facilitate discussion.

Session Four

Embedding Comprehension Strategies During Shared, Guided, and Independent Reading (Chapters 7-8, Supporting Materials)

- Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies in Shared, Guided, and Independent Reading
- Assessing Students' Reading Comprehension and Comprehension Strategy Use

Guiding Quote:

“Incorporating explicit strategy applications into your shared, guided, and independent reading will keep the instructional focus squarely on *comprehension*—right where it should be.” (page 98)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the role of comprehension strategy teaching in a guided reading lesson?
2. What tools are available for helping teachers plan for shared, guided, and independent reading?
3. What are some of the methods for assessing student progress?
4. How can teachers apply these strategies to teach comprehension better?

Workshop Activity:

1. As a whole group, discuss the assessment strategies and how these tools fit within the school and district requirements. Decide which tools will be most useful and how to use them effectively.
2. Provide the participants time to discuss and prepare materials necessary for efficient record keeping and evaluation.
3. Review the activities for connecting on pages 158-161. Have each teacher choose one of the response tools and make a connection based on reading this book.
4. Allow participants to mix-pair-share. Each participant will move throughout the space and will pair with another participant at the facilitator's signal. The pair will each share their learning connections. The groups will then mix again and continue to pair and share as time permits.

Classroom Implementation:

Review the materials from this text and in the supporting materials section in the back of the book. Use lessons and strategies from the resources to assist with the implementing comprehension strategies.

Looking Ahead:

Identify desired resources, materials, and literature that are not available at your site and explore funding sources you can use to acquire these resources. Review the CD and prepare materials necessary to support implementation.