

# Research paper

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How *Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* supports current research on reading comprehension.

## Informational texts

Knowledge of how to read and comprehend informational texts is considered critical in today's information-driven world (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2009; Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2009; Kletzien & Dreher, 2004; Palmer & Stewart, 2005). Informational texts use particular organizational structures and techniques that vary depending on the information to be conveyed, so explicit teaching of how to comprehend these texts is an important component of instructional reading (Almasi, 2003; Duke, 2000; Pressley, 2006; Reutzel & Cooter, 2003).

*Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* provides:

- significant exposure to a range of informational texts
- explicit instruction on the strategies necessary for the fluent and accurate comprehension of informational texts.

## Differentiated instruction

Differentiated instruction involves teachers providing the most appropriate instruction for each student by using flexible groups and by supporting students to read material at an appropriate level (Block, 2004; Cambourne, 2002; Cornett, 2010; Davis, 2011; Tyner, 2009).

*Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* provides:

- varied and flexible opportunities for differentiated instruction through whole class, small group, paired, and independent activities
- levelled texts for whole class instruction, scaffolded independent practice, and independent practice that enable students to read at an appropriate level.

## Shared reading

Shared reading is highly effective in developing students' vocabulary knowledge and the comprehension of older student readers (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2008). The shared reading approach has been identified as an important teaching model to include in effective reading programs (Braunger & Lewis, 2006; Davis, 2007, 2011; Reutzel & Cooter, 2003).

*Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* complements any reading program, providing:

- a platform for students and teachers to read a text together
- opportunities for students to discuss and learn vocabulary and content, and engage in critical thinking about the content.

## Metacognition

Metacognition addresses learners' knowledge and use of their own cognitive resources (Garner, 1987). Readers' metacognitive awareness refers to their awareness of how much they comprehend and their ability to use a range of strategies to assist comprehension (Pressley, 2002, 2006). Research shows a strong relationship between metacognitive awareness, the reading strategies used by readers, and reading proficiency (Baker & Brown, 1984; Garner, 1987; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995).

*Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* provides:

- explicit information on the key strategies employed by skilled readers
- teaching instruction that develops students' ability to use comprehension strategies that are appropriate for the text content.

Eight of the key strategies used by skilled readers are provided in *Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts*:

- Making Connections
- Monitoring and Clarifying
- Predicting and Inferring
- Questioning
- Summarizing
- Visualizing



## Readers' prior knowledge

Readers' prior knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension (for example: Allington, 2001; Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Marzano, 2006; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995) because the way in which a text is interpreted or remembered depends on prior knowledge. What readers already know about the content of texts influences how well they learn new information (Marzano, 2006). Consequently, linking to students' prior knowledge before reading is essential in supporting them to actively engage with and comprehend informational texts.

*Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* provides:

- explicit teaching to activate students' prior knowledge of a text's content, structure, and vocabulary
- opportunities for students to see the relationship between what they already know and what they are learning.

## Think-aloud approach

Teachers use the think-aloud approach to actively model the thinking of skilled readers – “watch me think” is an important approach within quality instruction (Allington, 2010; Block & Israel, 2004; Davis, 2011; Pressley, 2006). Skilled readers use the think-aloud approach to verbalize the thoughts, processes, and understandings they are developing from texts as they read. The think-aloud approach enables students to make meaning from texts.

*Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* provides:

- instructions for teachers to explicitly model the think-aloud approach
- instructions for students on how to use the think-aloud approach and opportunities for practice.

## Vocabulary

Vocabulary learning is a critical aspect of reading comprehension because words carry most of the meaning in a text. Students' vocabulary knowledge is a major source of reading and comprehending success. Explicit teaching of word meanings is effective for increasing the vocabulary of readers (Graves, 2006; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2010) and results in higher levels of reading comprehension (Davis, 2007; Nagy & Scott, 2004).

*Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* provides:

- explicit instruction on vocabulary that is critical to understanding content
- student-friendly explanations and photographs of key vocabulary that can be referred to before, during, and after reading
- opportunities for students to talk and think about vocabulary, which enhances comprehension.

## **Formative assessment**

Formative assessment is an integral component of metacognitive comprehension instruction (Davis, 2007, 2011). Built on the work of formative assessment researchers (for example: Black & Wiliam, 2009; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003; Valencia, 2010; Wiliam, 2011), *Explorations Strategies for Comprehension for informational texts* integrates the following formative assessment practices where teachers:

- explain and clarify the learning goals for the lesson
- state and demonstrate how students can successfully reach the lesson goals
- facilitate students' self-monitoring and assessment
- provide feedback to students about what they have achieved and what their next learning steps will be.



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