

Tool:	Content Area Reading Strategies
Category:	Classroom, School, Mentoring
Urban Specialist:	Cheryl Robertson
School Level:	Middle School
Target Audience:	Pre-Service Teachers, Novice Teachers, In-Service Teachers, Mentoring Teachers
References:	<p>Abdo, Pamela J., Amy E. Chan, Tonya R. Englund, Roy D. Liljgren, Steve E. Mielenhausen, and Margaret A. Van Fossen, "Increasing Student Science Achievement through Application of Strategies Learned in Reading Class", <u>Master's Action Research Project, St. Xavier University</u>, 1998.</p> <p>Bakken, Jeffrey P., Margo A. Mastropieri, and Thomas E. Scruggs, "Reading Comprehension of Expository Science Material and Students with Learning Disabilities: A Comparison of Strategies", <u>The Journal of Special Education</u>, Vol. 31, Fall, 1997.</p> <p>Bean, Thomas W., "Pre-service Teachers' Selection and Use of Content Area Literacy Strategies", <u>The Journal of Educational Research</u>, v90, p 154-63, January/February, 1997.</p> <p>Bryant, Diane P., Nicole Ugel, Sylvia Thompson and Allison Hamff, "Instructional Strategies for Content Area Reading Instruction", <u>Intervention in School and Clinic</u>, 34:5, May, 1999.</p> <p>Chang, Kuo-En, Yao-Ting Sung, and Ine-Dai Chen, "The Effect of Concept Mapping to Enhance Text Comprehension and Summarization", <u>The Journal of Experimental Education</u>, 71:1, Fall, 2002.</p> <p>DiCecco, Vonnie M., and Mary M. Gleason, "Using Graphic Organizers to Attain Relational Knowledge From Expository Text", <u>Journal of Learning Disabilities</u>, 35:4, July/August, 2002.</p> <p>Friend, Rosalie, "Teaching Summarization as a Content Area Reading Strategy", <u>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</u>, 44:4, December, 2000/January 2001.</p> <p>Glencoe Online, "Reading in the Content Areas: Strategies for Success", <a href="http://www.Glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/educationupclose.phtml">http://www.Glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/educationupclose.phtml</a>, August, 2001.</p>

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**Rationale:** Many urban students struggle with reading. These are strategies to help content area teachers help their student's increase their reading comprehension.

**Description:** There are four strategies that I have used in my urban middle school science classroom that have been proven to be successful in raising student comprehension and information retention:

#### 1. Semantic/Concept Mapping

Semantic or concept mapping, also known as webbing or clustering, is a visual representation of the content found in a chapter, unit, etc. These maps use lines and arrows to represent how ideas are interrelated.

The use of semantic/concept mapping is dependent up on the style of text that is to be mapped. There are six styles of text organization:

1. Sequential – provides information in a successive order.
2. Descriptive – provides detailed descriptions.
3. Classificatory – provides information in groups of related themes.
4. Comparison/Contrast – provides information on how concepts are alike and how they are different.
5. Cause/Effect – provides insight into how one concept can cause another.
6. Persuasive/Argumentative – provides the reader an opportunity to create their own judgments and opinions about the information. (Abdo, Chan, Englund, Liljegren, Mielenhausen, and Van Fossen, 1998)

Steps in using semantic/concept mapping...

1. Teach the entire lesson.
2. Model constructing a map by connecting related ideas. The more connections there are the better.
3. Give students an opportunity to create their own maps and provide feedback on the maps.
4. Practice, practice, practice!

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#### 2. Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers can take on a myriad of shapes and size. Graphic organizers can be found in many of the ancillary materials that go along with textbooks. Teachers can provide partial organizers

in which the students fill in the missing pieces, an incorrect organizer in which the students need to correct the mistakes, or they can provide a blank organizer for the students to create. A study by Katayama and Robinson (2000) suggests that a partial organizer provides several more benefits as opposed to a blank organizer. Such benefits are: more engaged participation, less student overload, and more encoding and understanding by the students. However, another study by Chang, Sung, and Chen (2002) suggests that using the method of providing of students with an incorrect organizer had a greater influence on student ability to summarize a passage.

Some important information to consider about graphic organizers:

1. All students can benefit from the use of graphic organizers, even learning disabled students.
2. The focus of the graphic organizer is to act as a facilitator and guide to comprehension.
3. Graphic organizers work best when used during periods of at least 20 days.
4. The design of the graphic organizer needs to fit the concepts covered.

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### 3. Targeted Vocabulary Instruction

Research has shown that these instructional tips are successful in teaching specific words and concepts:

1. Teaching the specialized vocabulary before the lesson begins.
2. Presenting new vocabulary in a visual form (graphic organizer or semantic map).
3. Give students exposure to the words in a variety of contexts.
4. Link new material to student's prior experiences.
5. Have students write sentences using the new vocabulary words in the correct context.
6. Have students develop a word bank or a word wall in the classroom. (Bryant, Ugel, Thompson, Hamff, 1999) (Misulis, 2000) (Simpson, 1996) (Irvin, 1998)

Effective vocabulary instruction is vital in the student's overall understanding of content area material. When students are able to effectively decode new words, they are then able to use that skill to help them determine the use of that word in a variety of contexts.

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### 4. Context Clues

Contextual analysis, or the use of context clues, is used to determine the meaning and pronunciation of unfamiliar words according to how they are used in a sentence or paragraph (Bryant,

Ugel, Thompson, and Hamff, 1999). Instruction in the use of context clues is the next natural step after the use of targeted vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary instruction and subsequent lessons should focus on how the vocabulary words are associated with the content itself. Therefore, the use of context clues, structural analysis skills, and dictionary skills can promote the acquisition and reinforcement of the vocabulary meaning (Misulis, 2000). The bottom line is if the students do not understand what each word means, they are not going to understand the relationship between the vocabulary and the underlying concepts found in the textbook. It is inevitable that students will encounter words that they do not already know. It is imperative for students not only to have the decoding skills to correctly read the word, but students also need to use context clues to help them understand the meaning of the new word. Complicating this process are words with multiple

meanings. It is important for a content area teacher to provide the students with the meaning of words in the context in which they are found in order for students to accurately determine the use of that word in later readings.

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### Conclusion

Effective content area reading instruction involves a teacher who:

1. Provides explicit instruction in the identified strategies.
2. Provides students with targeted vocabulary instruction prior to the lesson.
3. Prompts students to use reading strategies.
4. Provides daily instruction in the identified strategies.
5. Helps students learn to use the strategies independently.
6. Provides students with a variety of materials on which to practice the strategies.
7. Most importantly, recognizes that she is not a reading teacher, but a content area teacher employing reading strategies. (Bryant, Ugel, Thompson, and Hamff, 1999)