

The Interplay Between Metacognition and Studying

Standard: *Students will be aware of and use a variety of strategies so they can better comprehend and study texts.*

As students engage in more complex, informational reading in the middle school, they need to learn ways of transforming information and ideas encountered in text. They must recognize, for example, that some ideas in text are more important than others. Also, they must use a variety of strategies to organize what they are learning and develop personal systems for studying texts.

Illustration:

One of Jolene Froelich's main goals is to show her sixth grade students how to use different strategies to study science-related texts. She organizes instruction around themes that allow her students to explore key concepts through a variety of texts and activities. As part of a thematic exploration of large mammals, her students read magazine articles on endangered animals and learn to become more proficient in their use of study strategies such as underlining, making annotations, summarizing and organizing information through various graphic displays.

Much of what Jolene does involves making students aware of study strategies through explicit classroom demonstrations. For example, on Monday she distributes a copy of an article on grizzly bears. As part of their discussion of the article, they talk about specific ways of learning and remembering important ideas and information encountered during reading. Using a transparency of the reading selection, Jolene models how she underlines important points and makes notes while she reads. As she shows students these strategies, she thinks aloud as she sifts through the information to highlight important points. She then shows students how to transform key ideas, and the details that support them, into a graphic display.

The next day, Jolene divides her students into small groups, and gives each group a transparency of another reading selection about large mammals. Each group reads the selection and decides which important aspects of the text they should underline and annotate. As they work, Jolene circulates around the room providing feedback and assistance. After the completing their annotations and underlinings, each group displays their transparencies on the overhead projector and explains why they decided to underscore the parts of the text that they did. Each group then uses knowledge gained from previous class demonstrations on summarizing to write a group summary of the selection.

On Wednesday, Jolene announces plans to give a short essay test on the content of Monday's reading. In preparation for the essay writing, she demonstrates how to use the graphic display constructed at the beginning of the week to predict questions that might appear on the exam. After modeling one or two possible questions, she invites students to work in their groups to develop additional questions. After about fifteen minutes of group work, the class reconvenes as a whole group to share questions and decide which ones reflect the most important ideas in the article.

On Thursday students take the essay test. When they receive their results the next day, the students are pleased with their performance. Jolene parlays their enthusiasm into a brief process discussion which helps students evaluate the usefulness of the strategies as a means of studying. In future assignments, students apply strategies to new learning situations.

Elaboration:

This illustration demonstrates the importance of explicit instruction as a way of developing students' expertise in the use of several strategies for studying text. Jolene serves as a

model for students by showing them how she, as a skilled reader, uses the strategies. By thinking-aloud she makes public the processes that she uses as a skilled reader. Jolene also supports students by creating opportunities for them to work collaboratively in order to practice, refine, and reflect on their use of the strategies. Throughout the week Jolene creates a sense of competence and confidence about learning. Connecting strategy use to performance on the essay exam helps students to recognize the value of the strategies for future learning.

Accomplishments:

In Jolene Froelich's class, explicit instruction in the use of strategies helps students to:

- ◆ recognize that some ideas are more important than others in a text reading.
- ◆ transform information they encounter in a text using a variety of organizing tools.
- ◆ learn specific strategies to use while studying informational text.
- ◆ prepare for tests by predicting questions and organizing information.
- ◆ adapt strategies to fit personal styles for learning.

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