



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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The Teaching of Learning Strategies from Adolescent Literacy Resources, Meltzer, et al.

The essay presents five major types of strategies proven to enhance learning in both simple and complex tasks. Explicit instruction in these cognitive—and metacognitive—strategies can enhance learning, but their effectiveness is often strongly related to developmental aspects.

1. Rehearsal strategies include repeating passages aloud, coping ideas in students' own handwriting, underlining, and copying notes. Rehearsal strategies for basic tasks predominate in early elementary years. As tasks become more complex, these rehearsal strategies can enhance recall of features in complicated reading passages.
2. Elaboration strategies help students to make connections between concepts. Paired association tasks, keywords, and image generation are effective when used differently at various developmental levels. Elaboration strategies for complex learning may assist students in understanding difficult texts. Experimental studies have examined the effects on recall and other aspects of comprehension of such strategies as integration, summarization, and note taking.
3. Organizational strategies teach students to group concepts by categories, link concepts in various ways (e.g., part to whole; evidence to support or refute), and identify various levels and types of structures in expository text.
4. Effective comprehension monitoring strategies include self-monitoring, focusing attention, self-reinforcement,

and self-evaluation. (This is what we mean by metacognition.)

5. Affective / motivational strategies can help students focus attention, manage performance anxiety, establish and maintain motivation, and manage time effectively. Affective strategy instructional methods can, in particular, alleviate test anxiety and thus enhance measured performance.

The authors of this study advocate that content-area instruction must involve the teaching of comprehension strategies along with content. The balance between these two is key to effective content-area learning. This involves redefining content-area programs and learning outcomes.

In terms of implications for a school, using these comprehension strategies throughout the content areas promises substantially greater effects than if only a few teachers incorporate them. This, of course, is one of the goals of our school's current literacy initiative, now in its third year. Teaching comprehension must be a part of each teacher's lesson plans. No longer is the teaching of reading—and writing—left only to the English teachers; everyone in the school must assume responsibility for giving students the specific skills they need to access the text successfully.

Professional development should allow teachers to try various strategies and then discuss their efforts with colleagues. The current professional development offerings include time for staff to do this. Sharing ideas and experiences can help to make a good teacher even better.