



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Characteristics of Effective Strategy Instruction

from Helping Middle and High School Readers

During year one of the literacy initiative, the staff discussed the acronym MIRRORS to help teachers remember some critical components of teaching students various reading strategies.

M: model the strategy; explain how to carry it out.

I: inform the students about when and how to use it.

R: remind them to use the strategy.

R: Repeat the strategy through practice.

O: Outline the strategy's usefulness through constant feedback.

R: reassess the student's performance as a result of using the strategy.

S: Stress strategy generalization.

Other characteristics of effective strategy instruction include the following

- Gradually move from a high level of teacher support to independent use by the students (scaffolding).
- Teach the required content-area skills before introducing the strategy, so that students are not trying to learn two new things simultaneously.
- Present the strategy in context.
- Provide opportunities for practice.
- Encourage students to demonstrate that they can successfully transfer the strategy to other tasks.
- Demonstrate to students when use of the strategy has resulted in success.
- Encourage students to develop their own strategies—and to see themselves capable of this.
- Provide opportunities for students to talk about and share strategies.

Anticipation Guides

Middle and high school teachers are not discovering tried and true strategies used very effectively by elementary school teachers for years. For example, anticipation guides encourage students to reflect on prior knowledge and apply that knowledge to make some educated guesses or inferences regarding an unread narrative or expository selection or text. They are also used as a way to motivate students to want to read the assigned text.

An anticipation guide, as its name implies, is developed by the teacher to help student anticipate or predict what the text to be read is about. It consists of four to ten statements that are often opinionated, stereotypical, or controversial. Students read the statements and make some conclusions based on what they know, think they know, or just guess, without the benefit of having pre-read the text. The guide can be set up as yes-no, agree-disagree, or true-false. After students make their selections, they then read the selection or text to determine if their answers were correct.

Here is an example for an expository selection about the desert.

	Yes	No
Deserts lack all life existence.	___	___
Grasslands are the coldest biome.	___	___
A coniferous forest is extremely all year long.	___	___
Tropical forests have one plant type.	___	___