

Southwest Educational Consultants, Inc.

Lessons in Comprehension: Explicit Instruction in the Reading Workshop Dr. Frank Serafini www.frankserafini.com

The ebook you are about to interact with was designed to build capacity for literacy instruction across the intermediate (junior) and middle grades. You will find a variety of components in this e-book, including; a virtual copy of the book *Lessons in Comprehension*, an introduction to each strand of lessons, a demonstration of a lesson from each strand, a reflective interview with the teachers that conducted the lessons and myself, and some video clips of myself presenting additional information for your consideration.

The lessons presented in this ebook are not designed to be the only way to do enact these lessons successfully. The video lessons contained in the ebook are intended as DEMONSTRATIONS of one way to offer the lesson. The lessons should not be viewed as perfect lessons to be emulated, rather they are demonstrations of quality teaching that provides space for teachers, literacy coaches and administrators to begin to dialogue about effective literacy instruction.

The primary goal of this E-Book is to help educators build capacity for quality literacy instruction. The lessons presented are examples of actual working classrooms, with real students and teachers, not actors, implementing their versions of the lessons I created. We want teachers to remain flexible and reflective, making decisions about what lessons will work well with the students in their charge and the objectives they have established.

We hope that this innovative professional development resource helps build capacity for effective instruction in your classrooms, schools and school boards.

Thank you.

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Discussion Questions for Each Strand of Lessons

The following questions can be used to stimulate discussion before viewing the video lessons included in the Lessons in Comprehension ebook. Have teachers, literacy specialists and administrators consider their answers to these questions and share their ideas. These questions are designed to get educators thinking about the issues discussed and presented in the ebook.

The Role of Explicit Comprehension Instruction in the Reading Workshop:

- How would you define comprehension?
- What are the components of effective comprehension instruction?
- What does the term “explicit” mean for instructional practices?
- What is the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model of Instruction?

Strand 1: Inviting children into the World of Reading and Literature

- What is meant by a community of readers?
- What is involved in creating an invitational reading environment and a community of readers?
- Invitational reading lessons usually occur at the beginning of the year, how can a teacher continue to keep up the interest level among students for reading throughout the year?

Strand 2: Exploring the Structures and Components of Literature

- How do we introduce and call students’ attention to the particular elements and structures that authors and illustrators use to create stories?
- How do readers use these structures and elements to comprehend what they are reading?

Strand 3: Navigating Text

- How do students navigate or decode texts?
- What are some of the ways that a teacher can help readers approach texts in new and different ways and why is it so important that they have the ability to do this?

Strand 4: Promoting Invested Literature Discussions

- What are the characteristics of an effective discussion of literature?
- What is the ultimate goal of these types of discussions?
- What types of interactions foster discussions?
- What types of interactions impede discussions?

Strand 5: Developing Comprehension Practices

- How do teachers demonstrate comprehension?
- What are the components of an effective think aloud?
- How can a teacher ensure, when teaching comprehension practices, that readers do not become focused solely on the strategies but rather understand that their purpose is to make sense of what they are reading?

Strand 6: Investigating Informational Texts

- Why is it important that teachers include informational texts in the curriculum in their classrooms?
- Can you describe some of the unique challenges that informational texts pose for all readers?
- What skills and knowledge are required of readers to make sense of informational texts?
- What are the structures and elements of informational texts that teachers need to call students' attention to?

Strand 7: Extending Response to Literature

- What are the characteristics of an effective reading response activity?
- What types of response activities have we traditionally implemented that serve as busy work and do not extend readers' thinking or inquiry?
- How do the strategies presented in this ebook and traditional response strategies differ?

Strand 8: Examining Critical Perspectives

- What are some of the perspectives that a reader brings to the reading event that affects their understanding of a text?
- What is the role of gender, culture, history in the comprehension process?
- How do external factors contribute to the comprehension process?
- What does it mean to be a "text analyst"?

Three Part Observation Guide for Lessons in Comprehension

Before viewing the video lesson:

Read through the written description of the lesson included in the ebook.

- What are the important objectives of the lesson?
- Are these objectives similar to the ones you are required to teach?
- How have you addressed this objective in the past?
- What resources do you have available for addressing this objective?

Viewing the video lesson:

As teachers are viewing individual lessons, there are particular instructional “moves” that should be attended to. Watch the lesson and focus on the following:

1. How did the teacher introduce the lesson? What did he or she say to make connections to previous lessons? Were the lesson objectives clearly articulated?
2. What resources did the teacher select for the lesson? Were they appropriate for the lesson?
3. Focus on the language of the lesson. Were appropriate questions asked? Were “display” questions (questions with predetermined answers) asked, or were inquiry, open questions asked? What was the effect of the questions asked?
4. What kinds of comments do students make during the lesson? How did the teacher respond to the comments?
5. How did the teacher follow up the lesson? Were students asked to do appropriate things? Did students’ work relate to the objective of the lesson?
6. How did the teacher close the lesson? Did the teacher explain where they were headed in the next lesson?

After viewing the video lesson:

Discuss the relationship between the lesson presented and the ones you have used in previous lessons? What were the strengths of the video lesson? What were the areas that needed more support?

Watch the follow up discussion between Dr. Serafini and the classroom teacher. How did Dr. Serafini generalize from this particular video lesson to other instructional settings and practices?

What can you take away from this lesson that you can incorporate into your teaching immediately? What does this lesson say about reading comprehension instruction in general?