

Summary Sheet

Student-Facilitated Comprehension Routines

During **Stage 2** of the Guided Comprehension Model developed by Maureen McLaughlin and Mary Beth Allen, students are engaged in three activities: teacher-directed small groups, student-facilitated comprehension centers, and student-facilitated comprehension routines.

The student-facilitated comprehension routines should be taught at the beginning of the school year and continually practiced until students are comfortable and able to complete them independently in small groups. McLaughlin and Allen refer to the comprehension routines as “procedures that foster habits of thinking that promote comprehension of text.” These routines are designed to allow students to transfer their knowledge of comprehension strategies and apply them to independent-level texts in small peer groups. The three comprehension routines in the Guided Comprehension Model are:

- Literature Circles
- Questioning the Author
- Reciprocal Teaching

This sheet provides a brief description of each of the comprehension routines. For a more detailed explanation of the comprehension routines and the Guided Comprehension Model, refer to *Guided Comprehension: A Teaching Model for Grades 3–8* by Maureen McLaughlin and Mary Beth Allen.

Literature Circles

Many teachers are already familiar with the format and structure of literature circles. Literature circles are similar to adult book clubs or book discussion groups. Generally, students choose the texts, although some teachers may decide to assign students to read certain types of literature.

As a general rule, texts chosen should provide rich content and offer opportunities for discussion and debate. Students usually read the text on their own and then meet at specified times with their literature circle group to discuss what they have read. The ways to structure this discussion vary. You can simply allow students an open discussion or pose specific discussion questions and assign a role to each student in the group.

For more information on literature circles, see the following websites:

- What are Literature Circles? (www.literaturecircles.com/article1.htm): offers a description of literature circles
- Book Reviews (www.literaturecircles.com/book_reviews.htm): provides tips for choosing books for literature circles
- Structure of Literature Circles: General Guidelines (<http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/kschlnoe/LitCircles/Structure/genstructure.html>): provides guidelines for setting up literature circles in the classroom

Questioning the Author

Questioning the Author, or QtA, is another comprehension routine that is practiced during Stage 2 of the Guided Comprehension Model. The strategy was originally developed by Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, and Kucan (1997). McLaughlin and Allen describe QtA as “a text-based instructional format that helps students build a deeper understanding of texts by learning to query the author.”

QtA follows a specific process by which students pose questions to determine what the author is trying to convey in a text. The standard format involves five questions. Students read a selection of text (one or more paragraphs, but generally not as much as a whole page) and then answer the following questions:

- What is the author trying to tell you?
- Why is the author telling you that?
- Does the author say it clearly?
- How could the author have said things more clearly?
- What would you say instead?

The structure of this discussion can vary. You may have students take turns being the discussion leader or assign specific questions to certain students in the group.

For more information on QtA, see the following websites:

- ReadingQuest.org: Questioning the Author (<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/readquest/strat/qta.html>): describes QtA
- WiLearns: Question the Author (<http://wilearns.state.wi.us/apps/default.asp?cid=124>): gives the structure of QtA
- Questioning the author process (www.bcpl.net/~dcurtis/psd/handouts/s1-11/proc.html): summarizes the QtA process

Reciprocal Teaching

The third comprehension routine in the Guided Comprehension Model is reciprocal teaching. Reciprocal teaching was developed by Palincsar and Brown (1986) and is described as “a technique used to develop comprehension of expository text in which teacher and students take turns leading a dialogue concerning sections of a text.”

Reciprocal teaching involves four different techniques:

1. Questioning
2. Clarifying
3. Summarizing
4. Predicting

The process of reciprocal teaching generally involves each student in the group taking on one of the four roles. The “questioner” begins by posing questions he or she has about the text, which should then be discussed among the group members. The “clarifier” facilitates the group discussion and guides members to look for answers in the text. The “summarizer” gives a summary of the text up to that point in the reading. The “predictor” makes predictions about what he or she thinks will happen next in the text.

For more information on reciprocal teaching, see the following websites:

- Reciprocal Teaching: A Reading Strategy (www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/promising/tips/rec.html): explains reciprocal teaching in a question-answer format
- NCREL: Reciprocal Teaching (www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at6lk38.htm): provides the purpose of reciprocal teaching and the research base
- What Is Reciprocal Teaching? (<http://teams.lacoe.edu/documentation/classrooms/patti/2-3/teacher/resources/reciprocal.html>): gives an overview of the instructional procedure

References

- Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., Hamilton, R.L., & Kucan, L. (1997). *Questioning the author: An approach for enhancing student engagement with text*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- McLaughlin, M., & Allen, M.B. (2002). *Guided Comprehension: A Teaching Model for Grades 3–8*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Palincsar, A.S., & Brown, A.L. (1986). Interactive teaching to promote independent learning from text. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, 771–777.