



Supporting Comprehension in Secondary Classrooms Series, Session 6:

Writing as a Tool for Increasing Reading Comprehension

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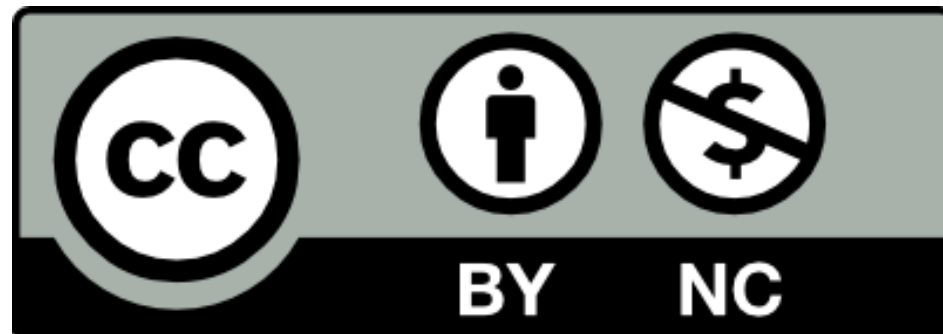


Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:

- Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading
- Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools
- Institute of Education Sciences Educator's Practice Guide: Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively
- Writing Instruction Across the Disciplines: Evidence-Based Practices in Grades 6-12
- Dr. Steve Graham
- Dr. Michael Hebert

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Purpose

This session will provide an overview of instructional strategies that leverage writing activities as supports for reading comprehension

Agenda

1.0 An Overview: The Reading and Writing Connection

2.0 Instructional Recommendations

3.0 Next Steps/Wrap Up

1.0 An Overview

The Reading and Writing Connection

Writing is Here to Stay

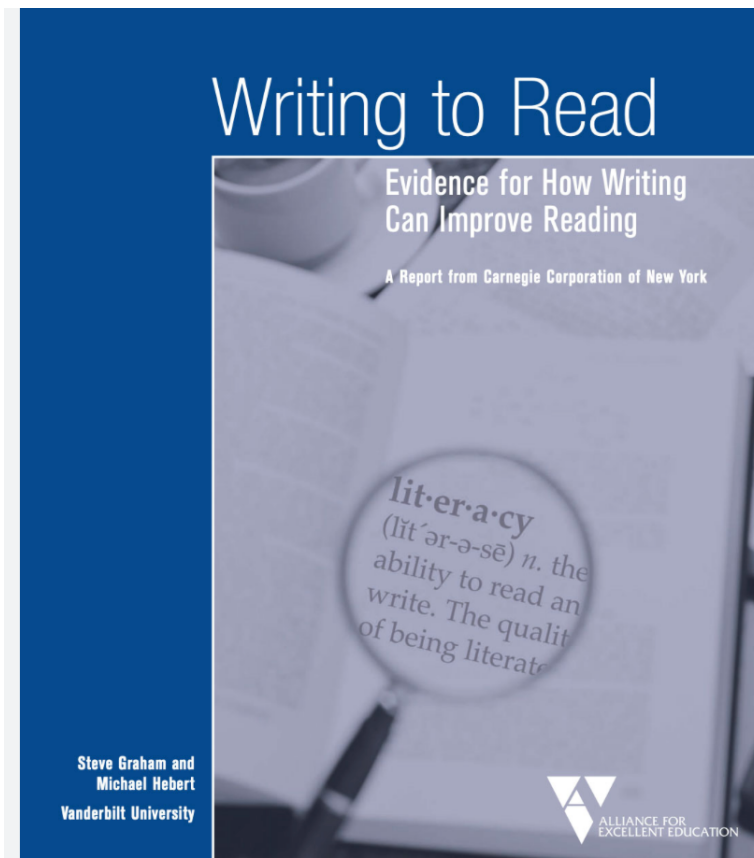
- “In a world dominated by digital communication, writing remains a fundamental skill that shapes our personal and professional lives.”
 - Writing encourages critical thinking
 - Writing is utilized in all disciplines in some capacity
 - Writing supports social interaction

~Morehouse College Writing Center, 2025

Writing Supports Reading Comprehension

- Reading and writing are connected in the following ways:
 - They both draw upon common knowledge and cognitive processes (Shanahan, 2006)
 - They are functional activities that can be combined to accomplish specific goals, such as learning new ideas presented in a text (Fitzgerald and Shanahan, 2000)
 - They are communication activities, and writers should gain insight about reading by creating their own text, leading to better comprehension of texts produced by others (Tierney and Shanahan, 1991)

Research



- Writing to Read Recommendations:
 1. Have students write about the texts they read
 2. Teach students the writing skills and processes that go into creating text
 3. Increase how much students write



Activity 1.1: Recommendations Reflection

- Review the Writing to Read Recommendations:
 1. Have students write about the texts they read
 2. Teach students the writing skills and processes that go into creating text
 3. Increase how much students write
- Which recommendation(s) do you regularly use (or support) within your classroom instruction?
- What area(s) might your students need additional instruction or practice with to strengthen their writing skills?

Our Focus for Today: Recommendation One

- Have students write about the texts they read
 - Respond to a text in writing
 - Write notes about a text
 - Answer questions about a text in writing, or create and answer written questions about a text (Question Generation)
 - Write summaries of a text

2.0 Instructional Recommendations

A. Respond to a text in writing

Benefits of Writing in Response to Reading

- “When students write about what they are reading and learning, they are thinking on paper. Writing helps them organize, clarify, and understand what they are reading.”

~Joan Sedita, 2020



Activity 2.1: Reflection on Current Practices

- Consider your current instructional practices (or practices you see in classrooms you support). In the chat, list practices that provide students with opportunities to respond to a text in writing
 - For example: Constructed responses after reading a passage
 - Think, Write, Pair, Share
 - Admit and Exit Tickets
 - Listing assignments: Steps to complete a task, directions, etc
 - Free writes/Journaling
 - Quick writes/Stop and Jots throughout a lesson

Recommendation: Targeted Annotation

- Annotation using Cognitive Strategy Sentence Starters
 - Provides intentional guidance as students interact and analyze text

Activity 2.2: Cognitive Strategy Resource Review

- Step One: Briefly review the “Cognitive Strategy Sentence Starter” document
- Step Two: Review the following quote with the goal of analyzing what the author is saying. Choose one or more of the following sentence starters:
 - A strong or impactful word/phrase for me is... because...
 - This word/phrase stands out to me because...
 - I like how the author uses _____ to show...
- “Competition happens at the bottom, collaboration happens at the top.”



Assignment 2.1: Bookmark Contextualization

- As you review the Cognitive Strategy resource, consider areas that would support your content area and students specifically
 - Consider modifying the bookmark to include sentence stems that align with your content area
 - Consider adding any additional sentence stems that would be beneficial for your students to develop automaticity in

B. Writing Notes About Text

Benefits of Note-taking

- Regular practice with note-taking strengthens students' ability to capture, synthesize, and construct concise statements
 - Note-taking is a skill that needs to be taught
- Note-taking facilitates the recall of material
- Note-taking enables further synthesis of new learning with existing background knowledge

Recommendation: Note-taking, Note-making

- A strategy that extends on the goal of note-taking by encouraging students to:
 - Think critically
 - Document important information
 - Capture thoughts about what they are learning

A Note-Taking/Note-Making Example

Note-taking Column

1. What is the ratio of heads to the total number of flips after the first 25 flips?

Answer: *Heads/Flips: 14/25*

What is the ratio for tails?

Answer: *Tails/Flips: 11/25*

2. What is the ratio of heads to the total number of flips after the first 50 flips?

Answer: *Heads/Flips: 22/50*

What is the ratio for tails?

Answer: *Tails/Flips: 28/50*

Note-making Column

1. Heads seem to fall more often than tails
2. Now, tails are occurring more often than heads



Activity 2.3: Note-taking/Note-making Practice

- Create a two-column chart with “Note-taking” on the Left and “Note-making” on the right
- Review the graphic on the next slide. Identify at least two facts based on what you see in the graphic. Note them on the right side of your chart (note-taking)
- On the right side of the chart, note what the facts make you think about. (Make statements only for this portion of the task)

Activity 2.3 Image for Note-taking/Note-making



- Left column:
Note-taking of two facts based on what you see
- Right column:
Note-making of what your facts make you think about (as statements)

C. Question Generation

Benefits of Question Generation

- When students are taught to pause and generate questions while reading informational text, they:
 - Learn to read more carefully
 - Deepen their understanding of important ideas in the text
 - Fosters comprehension monitoring

Question Types and Formats

- Question types:
 - Right there: The words in the question and the words used to answer the question are in the same sentence
 - Think and search: The information needed to answer the question is in different parts of the text
 - Author and Me: Requires connecting information in the text with information learned or read previously (e.g., inferential questioning)
- Question formats:
 - Who, What, When, Where, Why, How (5W and H)
 - Expository Terms (Analyze, Compare, etc.)
 - Multi-Step Assessment Tasks

Recommendation: Question Generation based on Analysis

- Provide a graphic or a brief piece of text for students to review
- Have students develop at least three questions using who, what, when, where, why, or how
- Have students share out their responses with the class, noting that there is no “wrong” question



Activity 2.4: Question Generation

- We will review the graphic from the previous activity again
- Create at least two who, what, when, where, why, or how questions based on the image

Image for Activity 2.4



- Create at least two questions using who, what, when, where, why, or how based on the image

Recommendation: Questioning using Expository Terms

- Tasks that require a specific type of response
- Often used in assessment questions
- Provides additional opportunities to work with academic assessment language

Example Questioning Activity

- Students create directions using specific expository terms
 - Example task: Write three directions using the words compare, explain, and describe *nimbostratus* and *cumulonimbus* clouds
 - Possible answers:
 - Compare the physical attributes of nimbostratus and cumulonimbus clouds
 - Explain the type of weather nimbostratus and cumulonimbus clouds typically produce
 - Describe the altitude that nimbostratus and cumulonimbus clouds typically occupy



Assignment 2.2: Questioning Extension Activities

- Consider the following options to enhance the questioning activity recommendation:
 - Provide share-out opportunities for the questions students develop individually. Have students note if they could correctly answer the questions raised by their peers
 - Incentivize the questioning activity by using questions generated by students:
 - As an entry or exit ticket
 - As a test-prep resource
 - As a student-developed quiz or test

D. Responding to a Text in Writing:

Analysis of Assessment Prompts

Recommendation: Analysis of Assessment Prompts

- Providing students with opportunities to interact with multi-step assignments provides:
 - Practice with identifying the instructional moves required to successfully complete the task
 - Exposure to the language and text structure of assessments
 - Opportunities to self-reflect on strengths and areas where support would be needed to complete the task
- Without the pressure of actually completing the prompt!

Assessment Prompt Analysis Process: The “Do/What” Chart

- Students read and analyze a prompt to identify the steps required for successful completion
- Students identify each action and summarize details in a “Do/What” chart

DO	WHAT



Activity 2.5: Writing Prompt Analysis

- Create a “Do/What” Chart
 - Left side title: “Do”
 - Right side title: “What”
- Review the writing prompt provided on the following slides and identify the steps students will need to complete

Example Prompt, Part One

Drawing upon Dr. Price-Mitchell's article "What is a Role Model?" write an essay in which you make a claim about which quality of a role model has been *most essential* in enabling Malala to achieve her mission.

In the body of your essay:

- Discuss how Malala's key quality of being a role model helped her overcome any difficulties she faced in pursuing her mission
- Use evidence from the excerpts to support your claim about why the quality you selected has been most essential to helping Malala achieve her mission
- Acknowledge why some people might propose that another quality of a role model has been most essential, and then refute that counterargument with logical reasons that support your claim

Example Prompt, continued

- In your conclusion, describe what the key quality of being a role model exhibited by Malala reveals about her underlying values or beliefs. What lesson can we learn from her story?

Identifying Instructional Moves: Develop a “Do/What” Chart

Do	What
1. Draw upon	“What is a Role Model”
2. Write	An essay; Make a claim about which quality of a role model was most essential
3. Discuss	How her key quality helped her overcome difficulties
4. Use	Evidence from the excerpts to support your claim

- What Else?

Additional Tasks

Do	What
1. Draw upon	“What is a Role Model”
2. Write	An essay about which quality of a role model was most essential
3. Discuss	How her key quality helped her overcome difficulties
4. Use	Evidence from the excerpts to support your claim
5. Acknowledge	Why some people might propose another quality
6. Refute	The counterargument with logical reasons
7. Describe	What the key quality reveals about her values and beliefs
8. Explain	What we can learn from Malala

Potential Extension: Student Reflective Response

- After analyzing a prompt, provide opportunities for students to identify areas of strength and areas requiring support
- Consider utilizing a writing frame to support the thinking of students as they reflect:
 - Based on the steps in the prompt, I feel like I would do well on... because...
 - As I review the remaining steps in the prompt, I feel like I would need support with... because...



Wrap Up:

An Additional Resource

Deepening Knowledge Opportunity

- Consider accessing the following on-demand training on the MiMTSS YouTube Channel:
 - Writing as a Tool for Reading Comprehension
 - Presented by Dr. Michael Hebert

References

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