Effective Practices in Reading: Specialty Supplies (Based on Chapter 10 of the Basic Skills Handbook)

McKay, Dianne

Part 1: The Reading Process
It can be difficult sometimes for instructors in subjects other than reading to understand the difficulty that basic skills students face when learning to read and master complex material. As an instructor, understanding the reading process that many skilled readers take for granted is a vital step to understanding how to reach basic skills students in any discipline.

The reading process involves two major and closely related steps: decoding and comprehending. Decoding involves moving one’s eyes over the words on a page, assigning meaning to each of the words, and putting them together grammatically in order for them to make sense on a sentence level. Comprehending follows decoding and draws on inferences, background knowledge and context within the larger text in order to make meaning. Comprehending, in other words, is “decid[ing] what to do with this information.”

Comprehending happens on 3 progressive levels:

- **literal** (Who, What, Where, When: The author’s main idea),
- **interpretive** (understanding why and how the author said something: tone and author's purpose),
- and **critical thinking** (analyzing, applying, synthesizing, evaluating).

A reader needs to be skilled at both of these steps in order to truly make meaning out of a written text. It is important that instructors across disciplines clearly define these steps for students, how to use them, and allocate enough time and opportunity for their practice.

Part 2: Effective Practices in Reading
Skilled readers utilize metacognitive skills in order to effectively comprehend text, which can be successfully taught to less-skilled readers. These metacognitive processes can be broken up into three parts the author refers to as **active reading strategies**: before reading strategies, during reading strategies, and after reading strategies.

**Before reading strategies** include:
- Previewing
- Predicting
- Generating Questions
- Activating prior knowledge
- Determine a purpose for reading
- Determining an approach
During reading strategies include:

Monitoring comprehension: When a reader monitors comprehension correctly, he or she is constantly conscious of how well he or she understands a text.

If one is not able to anticipate what is coming within a text; connect new information to prior knowledge; visualize processes, settings, and pictures; or self-check by paraphrasing or annotating, he or she can determine what is causing the comprehension problem(s) and try the following to rectify them:

- Lookup unfamiliar vocabulary
- Slow down
- Read aloud, make models, draw diagrams or concept maps (dependent on learning style)
- Read to answer questions
- Annotate

After reading strategies include:

- Reviewing or quickly rereading material
- Paraphrase and summarize
- Self test
- Evaluate and synthesize
- Reflecting

Part 3: Specific approaches that employ metacognitive techniques

The following are helpful approaches to reading a text and can be integrated into class activities and homework assignments:

SQ3R
- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recite
- Review

KWL+
- What do you KNOW about the subject?
- What do you WANT to know about the subject?
- What did you LEARN about the subject from the reading?
- What do you still want to LEARN?

PPPC
- Preview
- Predict
- Pre-read
These tools and techniques will help students become more actively engaged in what they read, thereby improving their metacognitive skills used for maximizing comprehension. For the full text of this article, including more detailed information about the SQ3R, KWL+, and PPPC, visit: http://www.cccbsi.org/Websites/basicskills/Images/Chapter_10_Reading.pdf.