SESSION 4: THE INTERACTIVE READ-ALOUD

Introduction

Overview
The work you did in Session 3 helped you to focus on the importance of prior knowledge to students' comprehension. You also learned and practiced some concrete strategies for assessing and building students' prior knowledge. In this session, you will learn how to build the comprehension of students in PreK and kindergarten through an interactive read-aloud procedure. You will particularly focus on how to design and ask students effective questions during the interactive read-aloud.

Objectives
By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Compare and contrast family strategies typically used in storybook reading with those used in the interactive read-aloud through your online journal.
- Explain the features of a read-aloud session focused on comprehension through online discussion.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of questioning strategies used by one teacher by observing two videos and completing a journal entry.
- Evaluate your own use of questioning strategies through journal writing.
- Plan and implement questions for the interactive read-aloud.
- Evaluate your own interactive read-aloud session through written reflection.

If you haven't done so already, download and print the Assignment Checklist to keep track of your assignments for this course.
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Structure of an Interactive Read-Aloud

In this section, you will explore a structured way of providing a read-aloud experience for students that supports comprehension. This excerpt presents a different perspective of the interactive read-aloud from the first article you read; it discusses a specific structure for providing similar opportunities at school.

Interactive Read-Alouds

First, read the article "Engaging with Reading through Interactive Read-Alouds." Next, read "Family Storybook Reading: Implications for Children, Families, and Curriculum." This article provides information about how many families naturally provide students with interactive read-aloud opportunities at home.

As you read both selections, think about the similarities and differences between the two perspectives.

In your online journal, reflect briefly about how research on how many families read together has been used to help teachers provide effective read-aloud sessions for students. Start by answering the following questions:

- What connections do you see between the family read-alouds described and the interactive read-aloud?
- Not all families read to their children in the manner described in the reading. What are the implications of the differences in family read-alouds for students’ comprehension once they come to school?

Improving Read-Alouds

Reflect on your experiences reading books aloud with PreK and kindergarten students, the course readings, and any other reading you have done. Consider the following scenario:

A new student teacher has recently been placed in your classroom. Within the first week, you meet with him to discuss his goals for teaching. One of the goals he lists is to improve his read-aloud sessions. He confides in you that he enjoys reading aloud to students, but he finds it difficult to hold students’ attention, and he has never felt that his sessions are effective in building their comprehension. You let him know that you are pleased he has chosen this goal and agree that you will observe a read-aloud session and give him feedback.

Discuss the following question related to the scenario you just read:

- When you observe your student teacher reading aloud to students to
As you complete the rest of the readings and assignments for this session, you should go to the discussion forum at least two or three times to continue the discussion. Refer to the discussion rubric to review some expectations for participating in online discussions in this course.
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Asking Effective Questions

In the previous section, you learned about the interactive read-aloud, a technique for building students' comprehension as you read aloud to them. Part of the interactive read-aloud involves asking students questions to guide and assess their comprehension as you read. In this section, you will explore the topic of asking effective questions more deeply.

Asking Effective Questions During Read-Alouds

Read the article "Text Talk: Capturing the Benefits of Read-Aloud Experiences for Young Children." This article addresses how to ask students effective questions during the interactive read-aloud. Specifically, the authors offer some tips for how to ask probing questions and encourage students to provide deeper responses. As you read, think about the kinds of questions recommended and how you could use these with your students. Some of the ideas from this article can be useful for the handouts you design for your final project.

Now, view "Questioning to Build Comprehension (part 1)" and the "Questioning to Build Comprehension (part 2)" videos. In these videos, the same kindergarten teacher you saw in Session 2 is reading an expository text aloud and questioning students as she reads. As you watch the videos, take notes in your online journal and pay close attention to the kinds of questions the teacher asks and how the students respond.

In your online journal, respond to the following:

- What strategies does the teacher use to keep students engaged?
- How do the questions the teacher asks help to build students' comprehension?
- Compare your own practice with the practice you observed in the videos. What kinds of questions do you tend to ask?
- Do you think your questions are more or less effective? Why?

Continued professional development occurs as you modify your practices to include instruction for all styles and needs. Consider the following when planning for instruction in your classroom.

Differentiated Instruction

Students with language differences often have difficulty formulating responses to questions, especially in large group settings. One strategy teachers can use to support students is to provide sufficient "wait time," or a period of time between when a question is posed and when the student answers the question. This can be anywhere
between three and five seconds. Unfortunately, studies show that teachers do not typically provide sufficient "wait time" for students; instead, teachers more often "jump in" to help students out. By providing all students, and particularly those with language differences, with sufficient time to respond, you allow them practice formulating their responses.

Analyzing the Interactive Read-Aloud Assignment
For this assignment, you will plan a series of questions to ask as you read aloud to a group of students.

1. Using the same book as the one you selected for Session 3, plan at least five questions to ask students during reading. Use Beck and McKeown's four kinds of questions (initial questions, follow-up questions, background knowledge questions, and vocabulary questions) to guide you.

2. Place your questions on post-it notes and place the notes on the pages of the book to remind you which questions to ask. As indicated in the article, you will not be able to plan all of the questions ahead of time because some will depend upon students' responses.

3. Complete the read-aloud and questioning with a group of students or with one student, and audiotape or videotape your session so that you can review it. Make sure you have permission to work with these students and tape them.

4. Write a 1-2 page analysis of your interactive read-aloud session. Include the title and author of the book and the five questions to use with the students. Make sure to respond to the following questions:
   - Which kinds of questions do you think best promoted students' understanding? How could you tell? Give specific examples.
   - What comprehension challenges did the students demonstrate? Be specific.

5. Don't forget to refer to the assessment rubric for this assignment.

6. Submit your analysis to your facilitator in a word processing document.

References


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Look Ahead

By now, you have undoubtedly identified some concepts and strategies you would like to highlight in your final project. At this point in the course, you should begin working on your final project and you may wish to ask your facilitator any final questions you may have about the project.

In Session 5, you will explore ways to support students' comprehension through a number of different extension activities after reading, including play, art, drama, and a story retelling interactive.

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