



3rd – 5th Grade Have Students Write Notes About Text



The act of taking written notes about text material should enhance comprehension. This writing practice involves sifting through a text to determine what is most relevant and transforming and reducing the substance of these ideas into written phrases or key words. Intentionally or unintentionally, note takers organize the abstracted material in some way, connecting one idea to another, while blending new information with their own knowledge, resulting in new understandings of texts.

Writing to Read

Without proper instruction in note taking, students may just write down words or phrases word for word, without thinking about what the text says. Successful note takers summarize the meaning, leading to better chances of retaining this information later.

Adapted from Marzano/Pickering, 2005

Note Taking

Note taking can be done as a whole group, small group, or individual activity. Students need to have note taking skills modeled and opportunities for practice with the skill in a whole group or small groups.

After multiple practicing opportunities, most students will be able to take notes independently. The goal is to write notes that are necessarily in a complete sentence – but words and phrases.

Poster/Sticky Note Large/Small Group Note Taking

- Before reading text aloud, teacher provides a purpose for listening.
 - Fiction: Characters, plot, etc...
 - Nonfiction: Penguins: what they eat, where they live, etc...
- Teacher reads aloud text.
- Teacher gives note card to write a note or draw a picture and place in appropriate area on poster.



Note Taking Comic Strips

- Fold or divide paper into sections.
- Have students draw a picture and write a brief caption in each section.



Pocket Notes

- Write topic/title on a file folder.
- Attach library card pockets.
- Label each card with a sub-topic. Include a pocket that is labeled "Other Interesting Facts".
- Take notes on index cards and place in pocket.



Note Taking from a Read Aloud

It is a challenge to teach students how to use the text as a reference and to cite without teaching them how to copy word for word. The following are two ideas.

1. Begin by teaching students to highlight only one or two words and then insert them into their own sentence. For example, if you're reading a story about Storms, they could highlight the words, "Boom! Crash!" and then write a sentence using those words such as, "The boy was scared when the storm went "Boom! Crash!"
2. While reading a text, stop and write down a word on chart paper and illustrate the word. Do this several times throughout the reading of the text. Then have students reference the poster at their writing table to choose a word or words when they write their own sentences. They are not required to copy a sentence or even finish a sentence frame only use any word from the poster to write about what they learned.

Post Its: Little Notes for Big Discussions

1. Tell students that this strategy is beneficial because sometimes when we are reading, we have a thought and then move on and forget the thought.
2. This strategy helps students to record their thinking so that when it is time to discuss the text, they have evidence or are able to remember what it was that they were thinking when they read.
3. Explain to students that a Post-It is a way of holding on to that thinking that can be placed right in the book.
4. This strategy helps students feel prepared for the discussion and gives them a record of something that they might be able to share with the whole group.

Idea retrieved from Teaching Channel Video: 1:41

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/enhance-student-note-taking>

Read-Cover-Remember-Write

When students are conducting research, being able to take notes is a necessary skill. Teaching students to take notes and not just copy down words is vital to getting students to write their own research in their own words. Remind students that we need to be able to remember what we have read to become experts on a topic. One way to do this is to pause and think before jotting down ideas.

Procedure:

1. Choose a short segment of text.
2. Read aloud the segment, cover it up with your hand and pause to think aloud what you learned. Tell students to not read more than their hand will cover at one time.
3. Jot down (chart paper, overhead, etc...) what you learned letting all students see your notes. Emphasize to students that you can't remember everything so...
4. Reread the segment to see what information may have been forgotten.
5. Remind students that notes do not require complete sentences, correct spelling, etc. as the point is to quickly get their thinking down.
6. Follow steps #1 and #2 again.

Caution: Students may sometimes begin to ramble on and list every detail. Remind them to avoid writing complete sentences and smaller words/articles such as a, and or the. Some students may need the teacher to limit a note to a specific number of words. This strategy helps students avoid plagiarism.

(Hoyt, 2009)

Cornell Notes

Cornell Notes are an excellent tool to take focused notes, use inquiry to highlight the main ideas, and to summarize knowledge learned. The idea is to emphasize not just taking notes, but also the importance of refining and using the notes as a study aid. They were developed at Cornell University in the 1950s by a frustrated professor who wanted to help his students learn to retain information better.

- Start by training students one piece of the process at a time (learning to take good notes is a marathon, not a sprint)
- Practice the format
- Move onto what is written down
- Teach students common abbreviations for your content area or academic abbreviations (expl, comp/cont, etc)
- Discuss with your grade level ways to scaffold expectations appropriately for your students.

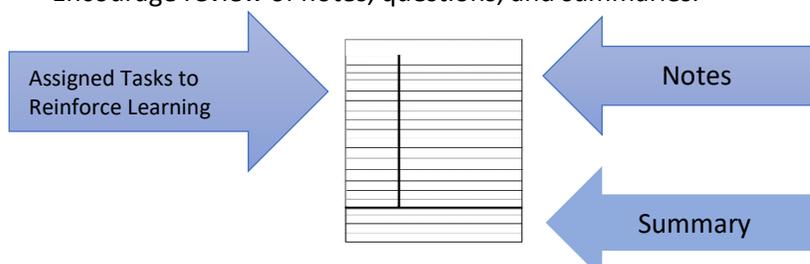
Scaffolding Ideas:

- When creating student notes or handouts, format them as Cornell Notes
- Have students generate the questions and write a summary over the notes provided
- Model parts of the process repeatedly that prove to be difficult for students
- Write questions and summaries as a class first after providing examples and explaining the process

Additional Ideas for Cornell Notes:

- Turn chapter questions into Cornell Notes, put dates in the left-hand column, or elements such as plot, setting, conflict for students to keep track of during note-taking
- Draw Thinking Maps on the right and generate critical thinking questions on the left. Summarize the learning at the bottom.
- Connect what is in the notes to what was on the test as a reflection over the efficiency of students' notes.
- Encourage review of notes, questions, and summaries.

(Pauk, and Owens 2010) [1962]



Three Column Notes

An important element of reading comprehension is the ability to organize text. Organizing requires readers to focus on the major elements of a text and not only to decide what is important, but also what needs to be investigated further. Three-Column notes are an adaptation of the Cornell system. Information is grouped according to its type, and then arranged in columns.

This reading strategy is designed to help students distinguish between details and evidence that support their claims and those that do not.

- In the first column, write the main subjects or topics from the text.
- In the second column, write significant details you learned from reading the text, from research or discussion.
- In the third column, jot down opinions, observations, thoughts, etc.

For additional information <http://www.readingquest.org/strat/column.html>



Two-Column Note Taking

Many nonfiction texts are written with headings. These headings usually reflect the main idea, and the text supplies the details that flesh out the main idea. Modeling how to read a nonfiction article using a two-column note-taking technique can help students see this structure and determine the important ideas.

1. In modeling the technique, first read each heading and section to decide if the heading reflects the main idea or if you need to restate it. Then write the main idea in the column headed "Heading" or "Main Idea."
2. Next, read the section and list the details that support or explain that topic or idea. Emphasize to students that *support* and *explain* are key words to keep in mind. Details that support or explain are the important details. List the important details in the "Notes" column. Start with well-organized material, and have the students practice this skill before moving on to more challenging materials.

Topic (or title of article or chapter): Ancient Rome	
Main Idea	Notes (Important Details)
Building and Technology	Excellent builders Roads—some Roman roads still around Bridges and aqueducts to carry water—some still around Plumbing—underground sewers Mills to grind grain
Farming	
Markets and Sellers	

Direct quote and page number	I visualize(or: The image I see in my mind—this is a good time to point out the similarity between the words <i>image</i> and <i>imagination</i>)
From <i>The Kite Runner</i> , p. 49 "I loved wintertime in Kabul. I loved it for the soft pattering of snow against my window at night, for the way fresh snow crunched under my black rubber boots, for the warmth of the cast-iron stove as the wind screeched through the yards, the streets."	I visualize a little boy looking out of his window as the snow is coming down. He is sitting there not saying anything but thinking about the way the snow would feel if he were out walking in it. I can feel the warmth of the cast-iron stove as I think about how it feels to come in out of the cold into a warm house. I can also think about the sound of the wind blowing outside.

Quick Write

A quick write is a powerful instructional strategy. It is a short, first draft piece of writing that helps students get words onto paper. Quick writes can take 1-3 minutes initially and increase to no more than 5-7 minutes, several times a week. This strategy can help students build stamina for longer, more complex writing.

Procedure:

1. Choose a topic that is based on a text that has been read and share the topic with the students. Using a projector, whiteboard, or smart board, model the quick write for students.
2. Explain to the students that once the timer is set, the writer can't stop writing during the quick write.
3. Set a timer for 3 minutes.
4. Begin writing but do not tell students what you are writing. They will stay engaged if they read as you write.
5. At least once, write "I can't think of anything else to write, I can't think of anything else..." then continue with your quick write. This will help students understand that writing is to continue even if they have difficulty thinking of something to write.
6. When the timer goes off, tell your students that you are allowed to finish the sentence you are writing. Finish the sentence.
7. Read aloud to students, crossing out and omitting "I can't think of anything else to write".
8. When it is time for the students to do this, give them 1 minute of think time before starting. Turn the timer away from the students so they are not watching the clock.
9. Ask volunteers to share their quick writes.



(Tompkins, 2002)

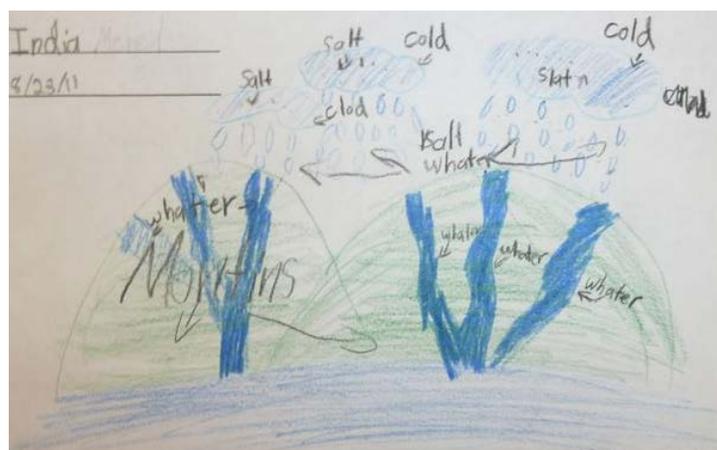
Freewrite/Freedraw (Variation of Quick Write)

Freewrite/Freedraw is a strategy to give students processing time to inspire new ideas. Students often need time to process information they are learning about or reading about, and this strategy provides that time. In addition, talking about what has been learned can also inspire additional ideas.

Procedure:

1. Give students a blank piece of paper.
2. Ask students to write/draw everything they can about the topic. Give students one to three minutes to do this.
3. When time is up, students are to turn to a partner and describe their drawing or read their writing.
4. Ask students to discuss with a partner one new thing to write or draw about the topic.
5. Provide time for students an opportunity to then add additional information to their original work.
6. This strategy is particularly helpful for students who benefit from talking about what they have learned in order to produce additional information.

(Adapted from Owocki, 2013)



Log Notes

Keeping a reading log allows students to easily track what they have read, how much they read, and any information they would like to remember. When students incorporate additional components, the record becomes a journal where they respond in a variety of ways to their reading.

Procedure:

1. The teacher ensures that students have a place to keep their log or journal entries, such as a notebook, binder, or notepad.
2. Students are encouraged to write or draw thoughts, personal reflections, questions, and descriptions about what they read or heard.
3. Teachers may provide a prompt to give students a purpose for writing/drawing their entries.

My Weekly Reading Log

My Goal is to read "Just-Right" books from cover to cover for at least 125 minutes every week in order to make me a better reader.

Date	Title of Book	Author	Minutes Read	Parent Initials

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Adapted from and additional ideas: http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/top_teaching/2009/11/readers-notebook

Home Reading Log

Name _____

Week of _____

Weekend	Title _____ Pages _____	Reading Minutes
	Summary or Reflections _____ _____ _____	Parent Signature
Monday	Title _____ Pages _____	Reading Minutes
	Summary or Reflections _____ _____ _____	Parent Signature
Tuesday	Title _____ Pages _____	Reading Minutes
	Summary or Reflections _____ _____ _____	Parent Signature

Sketch-to-Stretch

Sketch-to-Stretch is an instructional strategy where students draw quick sketches to stretch their thinking and understanding of concepts. This technique can be used in a variety of ways.

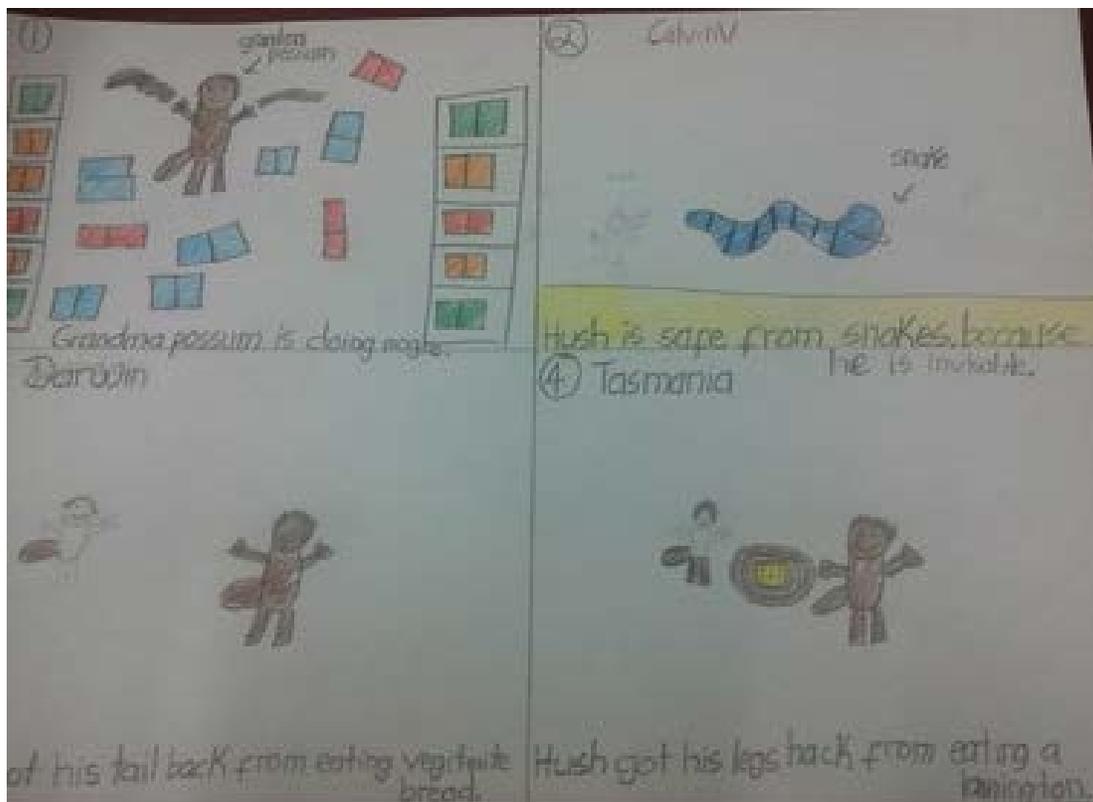
Procedure:

1. Read or listen to a text or chunk of text.
2. Tell students to think about what they read. Think about questions and ideas they have about the text.
3. Students should sketch those ideas.

Variations:

- As a pre-reading activity, Sketch-to-Stretch is a strategy that can help students connect with prior knowledge. Students sketch ideas that show what they know about a topic featured in an upcoming selection.
- Invite students to write captions (words, phrases, or sentences) for sketches.
- When students work in small groups, Sketch-to-Stretch can be used to illustrate a series of events. For example, each person in a group sketches a different phase in the life cycle of a monarch butterfly.
- Put all the sketches in a booklet or on display so that students can examine all of them for new insights.
- If a text has few, none, or very poor illustrations, it may not be necessary to tell the readers to put away their texts before sketching. In fact leaving the text open in such cases encourages readers to reread as they devise their sketches.
- With content materials, give readers copies of a passage minus the pictures, drawings, graphs. Then ask them to sketch. Readers can then compare their sketches with one another and the author.

(Harste, and Burke, 1988)



Episodic Notes

Students can use this strategy as a note-taking method for analyzing how a particular piece of text fits into the overall structure of a text. It asks them to identify distinct scenes or moments in the text and then explain how the scene fits into the overall structure and how it helps to develop the theme, setting or plot.

Purpose: Identify most important moments

- Determine the most crucial stages, scenes, or moments in the story or process.
- Students may need a stopping point provided in the text, video, read aloud, where they should draw and write. When students become proficient with this strategy, stopping points may not have to be given by the teacher. Students will sense a natural stopping point.
- Draw in the box what happens and what you “see” in the text. Be as specific as possible.
- Students can “title” the stage they have drawn next to “caption”. Underneath caption, students can describe their drawing.
- Remind students that the drawings are not works of art, but a quick sketch to capture the action and important details of the moment.
- Explain (in the notes section) what is happening and why it is important.

What You “See” in the Text	
	Caption
	Caption
	Caption

Adapted from Jim Burke’s Episodic Note from Tools for Thought: www.englishcompanion.com

Online Episodic Notes Template: <http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/toolepisodicnotes.pdf>

Pairs Check

Students can exchange their notes after they are completed. Each student will then discuss one another’s answers, agreeing, disagreeing, adding to, or changing their answers according to the discussion. Each pair must decide upon one set of answers and evidence to be submitted to the teacher.

(Eggen and Kauchak, 2006)



Structured Note Taking

Structured Note Taking is a strategy that helps students become more effective note takers. Using graphic organizers specific to a particular text (see notes and link below), structured notes assist students in understanding the content of the reading.

- Teachers can acquaint them with the signal or cue words (see link below) that authors utilize in writing each of the structures. Structured notes are really helpful when students are faced with interpreting complex text structures. The notes give students a reading guide to use as they navigate through difficult text, and act as a model of how students should organize their ideas as they are reading.

Steps for Structured Notetaking

- Select a section of text and determine the organizational pattern used to convey information in the text. Common organizational patterns are listed below.
- Next, create a graphic organizer that follows this pattern, complete with focusing questions, and distribute it as a study guide. (Graphic organizer templates are offered below.)
- Instruct students to read the chapter and take notes by recording the appropriate information in the graphic organizer sections.

Cause/Effect

Definition/Example

Proposition/Support/Listing

Comparison/Contrast

Problem/Solution

Concept/definition

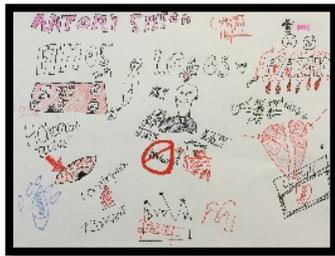
Graphic organizers are available at: <http://www.adlit.org/article/39906/>

(Sejnost & Thiese, 2010)

Visualizing Note Taking Strategies

Draw the Text

Using the actual words from the text as your guidelines, translate the text into a drawing to help you see what it looks like, what is happening.



Sensory Notes

Create a page with columns for the different senses (e.g., sounds, smells, etc.).

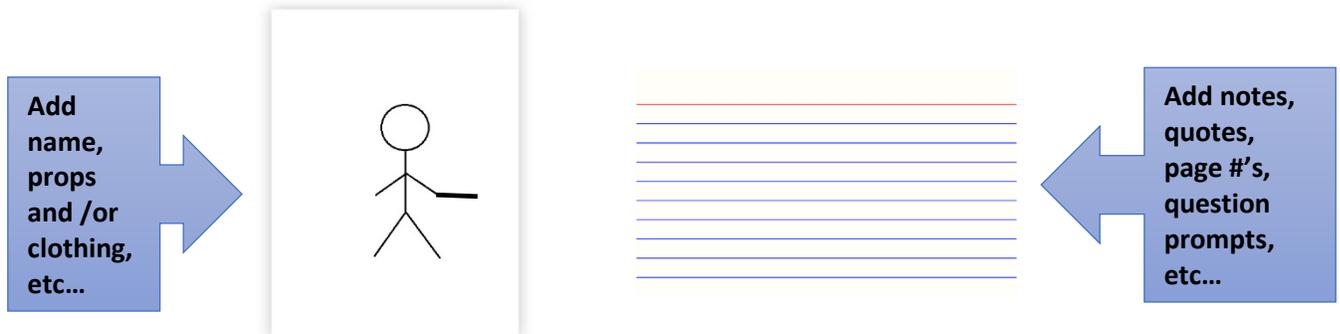
As you read, write down any sensory details the text includes. When finished reading the selection, use those details to write a description of the scene that will show you understand what you read and help you see what it looks like and thus better visualize what you read.

Students can also use this list of details to analyze the author's style.

Sample Chart: <http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/toolsensorynotes.pdf>

Character Cards

Taking notes about a character of a novel or story can help a student remember the character mentioned as well using a tangible item to add notes about the character as the story/novel/read aloud unfolds. Students can use the created cards to help them recall and keep track of the character while reading (or listening). The front of the card should have a stick figure drawn on it labeled with the character's name. The student may draw props or clothing on the character to help them recall and identify specific details about the character they have uncovered while reading/listening. The back of the card can be used for students to place notes or key pieces of evidence (with page numbers) found in the text.



Character Card: Can be used with Reading Standard #3

RL.K.3 - With prompting and support, **identify characters**, settings, and major events in a story.

RL.1.3 - **Describe characters**, settings, and major events in a story, using key details

RL.2.3 - **Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.**

RL.3.3 - **Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events**

RL.4.3 - **Describe in depth a character**, setting, or event in a story or drama, **drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).**

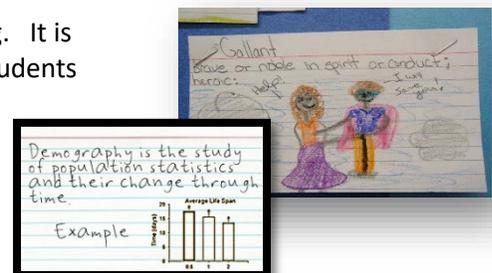
RL.5.3 - **Compare and contrast two or more characters**, settings, or events in a story or drama, **drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).**

Vocabulary Picture Cards

Vocabulary picture cards are note taking devices for students to keep track of the vocabulary used in the text they are reading and/or listening to. Students must create the cards themselves and draw an image that defines the word. Students can use the cards as a reference when they encounter the vocabulary term. The vocabulary picture cards may be created

- before reading/listening. (Words that must be pre-taught as students cannot figure out the word by context.)
- during reading/listening. (These vocabulary picture cards may be completed by the students as they use context clues to determine their meaning. Tell students that they can determine the meaning of the word by reading the words/sentences before and after the unknown word.)

Students can also add important words/phrases/images as they are reading. It is important that students create their own description with the image. As students continue reading/listening, they can add page numbers and/or sentences on the back of the card where the word was used again in the text.



Annotation

Annotation is a powerful reading tool. Annotating means writing your ideas, thoughts and questions as you read. Students can annotate a text to leave tracks of their thinking, so they can learn, understand and remember what they read. During the reading process, the reader marks the text at appropriate points, using symbols and/or words that serve as visual cues and help keep the reader focused on the text. Students can be encouraged to write questions, comments or to integrate “text codes”. Some codes could include:

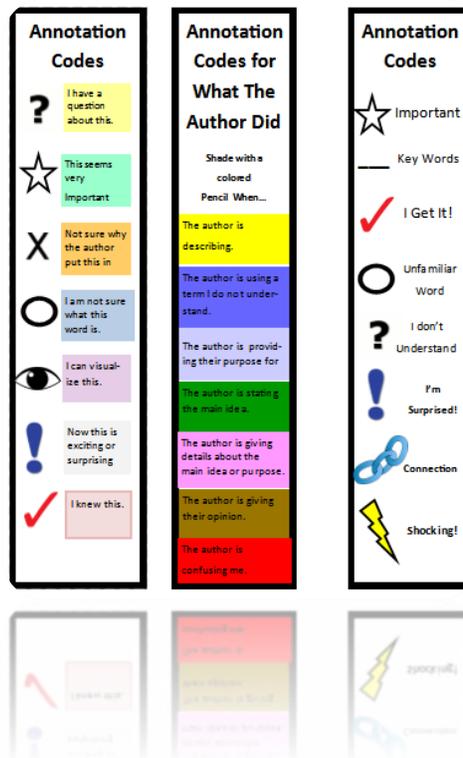
- ? = question,
- * = important information,
- ?? = confusion,
- L = new learning,
- R = this reminds me, etc...

(Brown, 2007)

Collaborative Annotation

<http://www.greececsd.org/district.cfm?subpage=937>

Annotation Bookmarks



Kinesthetic Note-Taking Toolkit

Where to Begin

- Model, model, model how and why to use the tools in the basket.
- Have the entire class practice each tool in the basket.
- Provide baskets of tools close to students desks/tables so they can have quick access to the tools when needed. Teacher may need to assign certain tools for certain students who need them.
- Tools are not needed for students who comprehend and understand the text, but they should be taught how to use them so when text is tough, they have a possible tool.



Sticky Notes

A sticky note can be used to write or draw a main idea, summary, ask a question, or note what is confusing by each paragraph, section, table, chart, graph, picture, map or even groups of sentences. Sticky notes can also be placed on a piece of notebook paper and turned in like a regular assignment.

Index Cards

Index cards can be used as note taking cards to

- identify key vocabulary words with a visual and student friendly description
- identify characters and keep track of them while reading
- fold into the number of chunks assigned by the teacher to take notes about

Highlighters

Highlighting is a helpful tool that must be taught so students can highlight purposefully.

1. Read through the selection first.
2. Reread and begin to highlight main ideas and their supporting details.
3. Highlight only the facts which are important or the key vocabulary not the entire sentence.
4. After highlighting, look at what they have highlighted and summarize what they read.
5. Take what was highlighted and write a summary paragraph.

Teachers may wish to have students use various colors of highlighters to identify main ideas from details (e.g., use orange to represent main ideas and yellow to represent supporting details).

Adding Machine Tape

When students need to have a place to “keep their thinking” while reading, have them tear a piece of adding machine tape the length of the book they are reading, line it up next to the text and draw a line under each chunk. Students should write a summary, list the main idea or gist of the chunk, draw the main gist of the chunk or ask questions above the line.

Crayon Highlighting

A crayon can be used to underline -- or a highlighting marker to highlight -- information that supports a topic. The highlighted text provides a visual representation of the "notes" students might write. When students complete their highlighting, have them use the most important highlighted information to write in their own words a summary or paragraph on their assigned topic or theme.

Craft Sticks

Craft sticks can be used to help students stay focused on the part of the text they are reading. Place the craft stick under the words being read and move along as reading.

Annotation Card/Bookmark

Students will use the cards/bookmarks as a guide for the symbols they can use to annotate a text to leave tracks of their thinking.

Chunking the Text for Note Taking

When faced with a full page of text, reading it can quickly become overwhelming for many students. Consider the reading level of the students and determine the appropriate length of chunked text to use with each student. Depending on students' reading level, the lengths of chunks can vary.

- A struggling reader may work with phrases, rather than sentences
- Determine the appropriate length of chunks for each group of students.
- Model how to chunk text using a simple text.
- Guide students through the practice and evaluate their level of understanding prior to allowing them to chunk text on their own.
- Allow time (3-5 minutes) for students to chunk the text (if it is not already done for them). Students can work alone or with a partner and scaffolding teacher support when necessary.
- Provide students ample time to read their chunks (using the reading/decoding strategies) and paraphrase and rewrite the chunks in their own words.
- A stronger reader can often work with longer chunks. Students can rewrite "chunks" in their own words. Breaking up the text into smaller sections (or chunks) makes the page more manageable for students. Students need to process the new information and can only handle so much content before they begin processing it.

Below are some ways to chunk the text so students can use different strategies to process it.

- Draw a horizontal line between paragraphs to divide the page into smaller sections. Sticky notes or "wiki stix" can be used to divide sections in a textbook.
- At the beginning of the year, group the paragraphs into chunks before you hand out the assignment. In the directions you will say, "Chunk paragraphs, 1-3, 4-5, 6-8." This can be differentiated by providing a different assignment to a student who needs the chunks to be smaller.
- The teacher must be careful to look over the paragraphs/sections to see where a natural chunk occurs. It is important to understand there is no right or wrong way to chunk a text, as long as you can justify why you grouped certain paragraphs together.
- Gradually throughout the year, teachers should increase the size of the chunk. When slowing increasing the size, students get acclimated to the size and do not realize they are reading a larger size chunk. This helps increase student's ability to read longer passages.

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