How Writing About a Text Can Lead to Greater Comprehension!
Writing to Read

Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading

A Report from Carnegie Corporation of New York

Steve Graham and Michael Hebert: Vanderbilt University
Outcomes

Participants will

1. Access three writing recommendations to support student comprehension of content area texts used.

2. Review strategies based on the three recommendations.
The Evidence is Clear

Writing can be a vehicle for improving reading.

In particular, having students write about a text they are reading enhances how well they comprehend it.
I. **HAVE STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT THE TEXTS THEY READ.** Students’ comprehension of science, social studies, and language arts texts is improved when they write about what they read, specifically when they

- Respond to a Text in Writing (Writing Personal Reactions, Analyzing and Interpreting the Text)
- Write Summaries of a Text
- Write Notes About a Text
- Answer Questions About a Text in Writing, or Create and Answer Written Questions About a Text

II. **TEACH STUDENTS THE WRITING SKILLS AND PROCESSES THAT GO INTO CREATING TEXT.** Students’ reading skills and comprehension are improved by learning the skills and processes that go into creating text, specifically when teachers

- Teach the Process of Writing, Text Structures for Writing, Paragraph or Sentence Construction Skills (Improves Reading Comprehension)
- Teach Spelling and Sentence Construction Skills (Improves Reading Fluency)
- Teach Spelling Skills (Improves Word Reading Skills)

III. **INCREASE HOW MUCH STUDENTS WRITE** Students’ reading comprehension is improved by having them increase how often they produce their own texts.
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Recommendation #1

Have students write about the text they read.

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Writing About Text Proved to Be Better Than Just…

- Reading It
- Reading and Rereading It
- Reading and Studying It
- Reading and Discussing It
- Receiving Reading Instruction
Instructional Practice

• Respond to a Text in Writing
  o Writing Personal Reactions
  o Writing to Analyze and Interpret the Text

Effective for low achieving students.

If coupled with EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION
Math Self Evaluation

These are two important things I learned in math today/this week/this month:
1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________

This was an easy problem for me: __________________________________
This was a difficult problem for me: ________________________________
I need more help with: ___________________________________________

This is how I feel about math today/this week/this month: (Circle your answer).

successful  happy  excited  confused  interested  worried  relaxed  bored  upset

This is where I got help (circle words that are true):

a teacher  a friend  my parents  the internet  other (explain)
Q-Think-Pair-Share-Write

• **Question:** Ask an open-ended question and tell students that they will think-pair-share the answer.

• **Think:** Give students 1-2 minutes to think

• **Pair:** Ask students to share thoughts with their partners and ask questions if they don't understand what their partner is saying.

• **Share:** Ask for student volunteers to share as you begin this process. Later, you should call on non-volunteers to increase student accountability:
  – I agree with [name's] answer...,
  – I don't agree with [name's] answer...,
  – I started the problem like [name] but then I...

**Write:** Now ask the question and have students write the response.
Science
ELA
https://writingisthinkingdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/wacelami.pdf
Math
Social Studies
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Summarizing

At your table discuss how you learned to summarize.
Summarizing Text Proved to Be Better Than Just…

Simply Reading the Text

Reading and Rereading the Text

Reading and Studying the Text
Instructional Practice
Write Summaries of a Text

Readers must recognize:

- which ideas are indispensable to the original text.
- which ones can be dropped altogether or combined.
- the need for paraphrasing the text using their own words.
Writing Summaries

1. Silently scan the document.

2. Identify one summary strategy that you would like to share/try.
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Writing Notes About Text Proved to Be Better Than Just…

- Reading
- Reading and Rereading
- Reading and Studying
- Reading and Underlining Important Information
- Receiving Explicit Instruction In Reading Practices
Note Taking

Group Time: Sports Icons
Note Taking Resource

6th – 12th Grades
Have Students Write Notes About a Text

Without proper instruction in note taking, students may just write down words or phrases word for word, without having student’s analysis or a good effect. Successful note takers summarize the meaning, which they are much more likely to retain this information. Students who take notes have an advantage from using their notes as a reference of what they are learning. It is also a great way to study for an exam or test. Teachers should provide time for their students to review and refine their notes especially when it comes time to prepare for and exam. Write a research paper, or other summative assessments of learning.

(Waxman/Rickering, 2009)

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 research identifies note taking as an instructional practice that increases reading comprehension.
In order to get students to respond either personally or to analyze or interpret, questions are needed.

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Instructional Practice

• Answering Questions About a Text in Writing
• Creating **AND** Answering Written Questions About a Text

If coupled with **EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION**

Effective for low achieving students.
What Should Guide Question Development?

➢ Grade level reading standards
   They provide useful guidance for appropriate questions to frame writing responses to text.

➢ Asking higher level questions
   They push readers to think deeply about the texts.
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Recommendation #2

Teach students the writing skills and processes that go into creating text.

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Instructional Practices

- Teach the Process of Writing
- Teach Text Structures for Writing
- Teach Paragraph or Sentence Construction Skills
The writing process consists of steps the writer should take when producing written language that conveys meaning.

Retrieved from: [www.illinoisliteracyinaction.org](http://www.illinoisliteracyinaction.org) Select a grade level, click on writing and then find standard 4/5..
Students’ reading skills can also be enhanced by teaching them how to use text structure as an aid for writing text.

Crowhurst, 1991
Teaching students how to write more sophisticated sentences by learning how to combine less complex sentences into more complex ones, requires modeling and strategy instruction.
Sentence Combining

Isolated grammar instruction appears to have little or no positive impact in helping poor writers become better writers (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Resource: Intervention Central

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Instructional Practice

Teach Spelling and Sentence Construction Skills
(Improves Reading Fluency)
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Spelling

- L.6-8.2b Spell correctly.
- L.6-8.4b Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word.

Teach high utility and high frequency Greek and Latin meaning-based word parts.
The Power of Word Parts

• Prefixes and roots carry the bulk of important word meanings; however, some key suffixes are important, as well.

• Over 50% of multi-syllabic words beyond the most frequently used 10,000 words contain a Greek or Latin word part.

• Since Greek and Latinates are so common in our academic language, it makes sense to memorize the highest frequency word parts. See the attached list of High Frequency Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots for reference.
These fifteen words have prefixes or roots that are part of over 15,000 words.

That is as many words as most student dictionaries!
Resource Idea
Grade Level Prefix, Suffix and Root Word Lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>com-, con-</td>
<td></td>
<td>with, together</td>
<td>commune, community, conjunction, combine, conspire, confluence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex-, exo-</td>
<td></td>
<td>out of, from</td>
<td>exoskeleton, exterior, external</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pro-</td>
<td>forward</td>
<td></td>
<td>progress, proceed, produce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se-</td>
<td>apart</td>
<td></td>
<td>separate, select</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retro-</td>
<td>back, backwards</td>
<td></td>
<td>retroactive, retrograde, retrospective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-fy</td>
<td>to make, to form into</td>
<td></td>
<td>fortify, solidify, liquify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-hood</td>
<td>state, quality, condition of</td>
<td></td>
<td>neighborhood, childhood, brotherhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ice</td>
<td>state or quality of</td>
<td></td>
<td>justice, service, accomplice, apprentice, Injustice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-some</td>
<td>characterized by a thing, quality, state, or action</td>
<td></td>
<td>awesome, burdensome, winsome, quarrelsome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ward</td>
<td>in the direction of</td>
<td></td>
<td>forward, toward, westward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ish</td>
<td>like, having the characteristics of, inclined or tending to</td>
<td></td>
<td>childish, girlish, impish, freakish, bookish, oldish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-less</td>
<td>without</td>
<td></td>
<td>tireless, childless, sleepless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ad</td>
<td>to, toward</td>
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<td>adequate, adhere, adjective, assimilates, accommodate, acknowledge, alliteration, appointment</td>
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<tr>
<td>amo</td>
<td>love</td>
<td></td>
<td>amateur, amiable, amicable, amorous, enamored, enemy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aqua</td>
<td>water</td>
<td></td>
<td>aquarium, aqueduct, aquaculture, aquamarine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Game
http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/improve-comprehension-word-game-1042.html?tab=3#tabs
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Recommendation #3

Increase how much students write.

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Increasing the Amount of Writing
Biggest Enemy

If you can read everything your students write, you’re not assigning enough writing!
Writing should be a part of every content area classroom.

You can't avoid thinking when you write!
What new strategy, resource or concept from the *Writing to Read* research do you want to implement?
• Kathi Rhodus krhodus@isbe.net
• Jill Brown jbrown@isbe.net
References

• Graham, S. (2012). Address given at UIRA Conference, Ogden, Utah
• Shanahan, T. Thank Goodness the Writing Scores are Going to Drop. Retrieved August 1, 2013, from http://www.shanahananonliteracy.com