Writing to Read

Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading

A Report from Carnegie Corporation of New York

2010

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.
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.
## Writing to Read Note-Catcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations &amp; Instructional Practices</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have students write about the texts they read.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Respond to a Text in Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Write Summaries of a Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource: Summarizing Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Write Notes About a Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource: Note Taking Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Answer Questions About a Text in Writing or Create and Answer Written Questions About a Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource: Text Dependent Question Guide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teach Students the Writing Skills and Processes That Go into Creating Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach the Process of Writing; Text Structures for Writing; Paragraph or Sentence Construction Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource: Text Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach Spelling and Sentence Construction Skills (Fluency)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource: A Checklist for Evaluating A Spelling Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach Spelling Skills (Word Reading)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reflections

Next Steps:

---

### Recommendations

- Your Notes & Resources
- Instructional Practices
- Writing to Read Note-Catcher

### Reflections

- Recommendations
- Instructional Practices
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.
Recommendation #1

Have students write about the text they read.

Students’ comprehension of science, social studies, and language arts texts is improved when they write about what they read.
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.
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
  Give “think time”
  o Writing Personal Reactions
  o Writing to Analyze and Interpret the Text

Give “talk time”

If coupled with EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION Effective for low achieving students.
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.
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.
Summary Handout

1. Skim the handout at your table.
2. Choose a summary idea you like for your classroom.
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.
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 Handout

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 extracted 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 is the text says. Successful note-takers summarize the meaning, looking for better chances at success. Good note-takers summarize the meaning, which they are much more likely to retain this information later.

Adapted from Miranda/Pickering, 2005
In order to get students to respond either personally or to analyze or interpret, questions are needed.

1. **H ave 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)
   - 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

2. **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)

3. **Increase How Much Students Write.** Students’ reading comprehension is improved by having them increase how often they produce their own texts.
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.
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.
Recommendation #2

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 texts.
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)  
  Writing # 4 & 5 & Reading #5
- 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.
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 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

K-5 Resource:
http://www.readingrockets.org/article/how-teach-expository-text-structure-facilitate-reading-comprehension
## Text Structure

### Text Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Signal Words</th>
<th>Graphic Organizers</th>
<th>Summary Questions</th>
<th>Paragraph Frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>The author explains a topic, idea, person, place, thing, event, or concept by listing characteristics, features, and examples.</td>
<td>For example, characteristics are listed; consider concepts of importance.</td>
<td>Concept Map</td>
<td>What specific person, place, thing, event, or concept is being described?</td>
<td>A _______ is a type of _______. It is made up of ______. It looks like _______. Some _______ have ________ such as _______. For example, _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence</td>
<td>The author lists or tells in numerical or chronological order.</td>
<td>First, second, third, last, then, after, before, prior to, following, finally.</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>What sequence of events is being described?</td>
<td>Here is how a _______ is made. First, _______. Next, _______. Then, _______. Finally, _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare and Contrast</td>
<td>The author explains how two or more things are alike and/or how they are different.</td>
<td>Differ in one or more ways, same as, as well as, on the other hand, both, either, or.</td>
<td>Venn Diagram</td>
<td>What items are being compared?</td>
<td>There are _______ and _______ items. Both _______ and _______ have _______ similar. Both also _______ as well as _______. On the other hand, one way they differ is _______. Another difference is _______. Although they share _______ only, the _______.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All five text structures are tested on Kansas Reading Assessment.*

C. Simoneau, K. O’Cruit, T. Konrad & © ESSDACK
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.
Bryan sat by the fire. Bryan read a book.

“Bryan sat by the fire and read a book.”

Jan performed poorly on her science test. She forgot to study.

“Jan forgot to study and performed poorly on her science test.”
Sentence Combining

Teacher models how to combine simpler sentences into more complex ones.

Students practice combining similar sentences.

(Hunt and O’Donnell, 1970)

Resource: Reading Rockets
Strategy, mentor texts, research…

http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/sentence_combining
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.
Instructional Practice

Teach Spelling and Sentence Construction Skills

(Improves Reading Fluency)
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.
Spelling Resources

Florida Center for Reading Research Student Activities

http://www.fcrr.org/curriculum/SCAindex.shtml

Center on Instruction: Spelling Video

https://vimeo.com/72895477

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.
Recommendation #3

Students’ reading comprehension is improved by having them increase how often they produce their own texts.

Increase how much students write.
Increasing the Amount of Writing
If you can read everything your students write, you’re not assigning enough writing!
How much time should students engage with writing in a school day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Time Per Day Spent in Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>30 Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st - 5th Grades</td>
<td>30 Minutes: Teaching Writing Strategies, Techniques and Skills AND 30 Minutes: Writing Practice (students apply the skills they learned from instruction)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This includes writing practice for all subjects.

*Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers* (What Works Clearinghouse)
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.shanahanonliteracy.com