

Classroom Libraries for Comprehension Instruction

Schools across America recognize the important role comprehension strategies play in reading instruction. Current research thoroughly documents the need for increased comprehension instruction (e.g., Pressley, 2006; Duffy, 2002; Block, 2006; Rasinski, 2003; Block & Pressley, 2003; Allen, 2002; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997.)

As teachers learn more about comprehension strategy instruction and the effect it has on student achievement and motivation they search for the best books to help students understand each of the different strategies.

Gretchen Courtney and Associates, Ltd. has reviewed the highest quality trade books and created comprehension libraries designed to support instruction in the strategic use of comprehension strategies. The best instruction is greatly enhanced with engaging reading selections.

The titles in these kindergarten through eighth grade level **Comprehension Strategy Classroom Library** collections:

- Correlate directly with research-based comprehension strategies
- Reflect a wide range of genres
- Represent a diverse range of cultures and experiences
- Engage students through high quality writing and interesting subject matter

Gretchen Courtney & Associates, A Literacy Engineering Firm

These **Comprehension Strategy Classroom Libraries** were developed by Gretchen Courtney and Jerry Michel of Gretchen Courtney & Associates, Ltd.

Gretchen Courtney has operated her own literacy consulting firm for more than twenty years, developing extensive, engaging, and research-based literacy curriculum, instruction, and assessment. She shares her expertise in the instruction and assessment of vocabulary, phonological awareness, reading, writing, spelling, and literature with school districts across the country. Her most recent publication is *Nonfiction Literacy*, a teacher resource book developed specifically to promote classroom instruction utilizing nonfiction texts.

Jerry Michel has been involved in literacy education for over twenty years as an educator, bookseller, and consultant. Recognized by publishers and educators alike for his expertise in linking curriculum goals, student interests, and quality children's literature, he currently serves as Gretchen Courtney & Associates' Director of Professional Development.

Gretchen Courtney & Associates designs, builds, and supports systems for all aspects of literacy development. Their research-based consultation combines years of classroom experience, proven literacy practices, and powerful professional development sessions. Through teacher training and curriculum development, Gretchen Courtney and Associates leads school districts through a literacy renewal that has both immediate and long-lasting

effects on student achievement and motivation. In addition, both Gretchen and Jerry are frequent presenters at state, national, and international conferences.

Why Do Students Need Comprehension Strategy Instruction?

Proficient readers use a variety of specific comprehension strategies. In April of 2000, the National Reading Panel Report identified text comprehension strategies as one of the five major areas of reading instruction today. The National Reading Panel also emphasized the fact that comprehension is an active process between the reader and a text, a process that is both “intentional and thoughtful.”

In the years leading up to and following the National Reading Panel Report, much has been written about comprehension instruction. Hempenstall (2004) notes, “when teachers model their own active comprehension processes for their students, and provide, encouragement, guidance, and regular practice opportunities, students make superior progress.”

Nearly all educators agree with the assertion that direct instruction for developing reading comprehension strategies is needed; the challenge comes with implementing strategic instruction successfully. With successful implementation, it helps students improve as readers, especially those who are low achieving (Block, Gambrell, and Pressley, 2002).

Comprehension instruction begins by showing students in well designed read aloud and shared reading sessions how proficient readers apply comprehension strategies before, during, and after they read. The new **Comprehension Strategy Classroom Library** collections provide teachers with the texts they need to successfully implement comprehension strategy instruction in their classrooms. The texts are selected to correlate with the comprehension strategies most often identified in current reading research: predicting, summarizing, connecting, questioning, inferring, and imaging.

These comprehension strategies are interwoven and used concurrently by expert readers without conscious effort. In order to help students develop and synthesize these strategies, they need explicit instruction. Content and chronology are equally important, as each strategy sets the stage for the next. The **Comprehension Strategy Classroom Libraries** are strategically organized scaffolding experiences so that students develop reading expertise successfully weaving strategies into a technique we call strategy streaming.