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# The Most Effective Pre-reading Strategies for Comprehension

Jessica Marinaccio  
*St. John Fisher College*

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The Most Effective Pre-reading Strategies for Comprehension

By

Jessica Marinaccio

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Dr. Joellen Maples

School of Arts and Sciences

St. John Fisher College

May 2012

**Abstract**

This study aimed to compare different pre-reading strategies that improve students' comprehension. This research determined that teachers who activated students' prior knowledge before reading enhanced their students' comprehension. Data was collected through observation of students utilizing three different pre-reading strategies, an interview with a classroom teacher, and a multiple-choice comprehension quiz. The study reveals that students benefited from the book feature walk pre-reading strategy the greatest because students' prior knowledge and peer interaction were used the greatest. Teachers' implications include knowing the pre-reading strategy that will be the most efficient and knowing the text for students to successfully comprehend the provided text.

### **The Most Effective Pre-reading Strategies to Improve Comprehension**

Many comprehension strategies are significant for students to learn and use before, during, and after reading. Before students read a book, it is imperative for teachers to activate their prior knowledge to help them connect the information to their new found knowledge. There are various methods for teachers to activate students' prior knowledge. Beers (2003) found that, "most teachers were introducing stories...by telling students something about the text" (p. 73). Though it is vital that teachers give information about the text, activating students' prior knowledge to increase their comprehension is more than giving them a short summary. Students need to be engaged and associate the information to their schema. It is evident that comprehension is a reading process, however struggling readers tend to rely on comprehension as answering questions correctly after reading the text (Beers, 2003). It is important for teachers to enforce that pre-reading strategies will help students understand the information and engage them in reading.

Teachers recognize that comprehension is vital to reading. This topic will benefit teachers by providing the importance of activating and engaging students before reading. Students who are not able to connect to the topic before reading will have no previous knowledge and therefore be unable to comprehend the book at the same level as students who's prior knowledge is activated. Without this research, teachers will be less likely to give students appropriate connections prior to reading the topic of the book and students will not comprehend the information to their fullest potential.

According to Larson and Marsh (2005), learning is a mutually constituted social, cultural and historical process that is mediated by language and interaction. Students pre-reading

strategies need to foster the prior knowledge that they have acquired at home, through peers, and from what they have learned at school.

The purpose of this study was to find which pre-reading strategy would improve student's comprehension. Given that literacy is a social practice and learning occurs when teachers activate their students' prior knowledge before reading, it has been found that students will benefit from the book feature walk pre-reading strategy the greatest. In these strategies, students' prior knowledge and peer interaction was used the greatest. The previewing vocabulary pre-reading strategy also is very advantageous because it provides the students with knowledge that they will use during reading. Lastly, the think aloud pre-reading strategy is the least favorable because students do not interact with each other and the nonexistence of their own questioning affects them. Teachers, with their knowledge of their students and the texts they can provide their students with the strategy that will allow them to comprehend the content the greatest.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Literacy is the combination of reading, writing, and speech and how they relate to our everyday lives. Literacy is a social practice. According to Larson and Marsh (2005), teachers need to recognize literacy as a social practice and understand the role language plays in literacy learning and use. Children learn literacy when they are immersed in literate societies. Learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life (Vygotsky, 1978). Literacy starts when children are first born; they acquire and learn from their parents. Teachers should use the prior knowledge of the students to promote emphasis on activities that facilitate both oral and written discourse in the classroom.

People acquire their language through social exposure in their everyday lives. Gee (2001) states, “Any discourse (primary or secondary) is for most people most of the time only mastered through acquisition, not learning” (p. 3). Primary discourses are acquired in the home through socialization with family members in mostly oral forum. When a child observes their parent model an activity repeatedly, eventually they pick up on the act. Some cultures value acquisition and expose their children to modeling and the child picks it up over time rather than in small bits. Other cultures value learning and break down what is to be mastered into sequential steps and analytic parts and engage in explicit explanation (Gee, 2001). Students use the knowledge from home and bring it into the school setting. Teachers need to draw out this acquired knowledge to engage readers.

According to sociocultural theory, learning occurs through participation in social, cultural, and historic contexts that are mediated by interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, children learn by participating in sociocultural activity in both formal and informal contexts of culturally relevant situations (Larson and Marsh, 2005). Specifically, children learn the meaning of written language in both contexts of culturally relevant situations both in and out of school.

The zone of proximal development offers an effective tool in analysis and the use of classroom interaction as context for learning (Vygotsky, 1978). When children feel that their teacher is available for support when they are doing something new, the learning is more likely to happen. Vygotsky argued that to understand the relationship between developing and learning, two developmental levels must be distinguished: the actual and the potential levels of development. The actual refers to those accomplishments a child can demonstrate alone or perform independently. The actual levels are in contrary to the potential levels of development as suggested by the zone of proximal development in what children can do with assistance.

Students, under the adult guidance or in collaboration are more capable with their peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Activating students' prior knowledge before reading will allow students to become engaged with the book and that will lead to student comprehension.

Heath (1982) argues that the means of making sense from books and relating their contents to knowledge about the real world is acquired rather than learned depending on the child's cultural background. Different communities use language and literacy differently and are based on cultural ways of knowing. The ways we use and learn language in our home and communities have implications for school success. Teachers need to recognize the differences and build on what students bring rather than seeing them as deficits. In Heath's research, she went to three different communities in North Carolina, Trackton, Middletown, and Roadville. It was shown that all of the community's literacies were different but apparent.

As the children went through the school districts, the two communities that were not mainstream began to fail in terms of education beyond the elementary school years. What affected this the most is reading at young age was present in the Middletown children but not in the other two communities. Teachers curriculum is based on mainstream children, therefore slowly all the other children will not understand the information. Teachers need to connect students' knowledge to the books provided to allow students to become engaged. The non-mainstream students in North Carolina had evident knowledge of literacy before coming to school but the teachers were not able to connect their prior knowledge to the new information. Learning happens when students are interacting cooperatively with their peers in their own environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers need to take into consideration the prior knowledge students have from home and peers, and use it to help their students comprehend successfully.



Students' prior knowledge is not only influenced from home life, but peers as well. Rogoff (1995) came up with a term, guided participation, which reflects the sociocultural analysis. Guided participation is meant to focus attention on the system of interpersonal engagements and arrangements that are involved in participation in activities, which is managed collaboratively by individuals and their social partners in face-to-face or other interaction, as well as in the adjustment of arrangements for each other's and their own activities (Rogoff, 1995). Teachers must guide their students in providing strategies to engage them prior to reading with their peers, therefore students will be more pertinent to comprehend. Working with their peers before reading will help provide them with information that they can draw from their schema.

Learning is a social phenomenon mediated by language in interaction and by social institutional processes as people accommodate each other's involvement (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Students use their prior knowledge to understand information and apply their knowledge to new facts. Before reading, teachers need to engage students with the story and help them connect to the new information and this will support students' comprehension. Many teachers believe that comprehension is only questioning after reading, but students will not be able to answer questions correctly if teachers do not engage the readers before reading the story (Beers, 2003). When a teacher activates students' prior knowledge before reading, students will be able to comprehend.

### **Research Question**

Given that literacy is a social practice and learning occurs when teachers activate their students' prior knowledge before reading, this action research project asks, what pre-reading

strategies increase comprehension? This research will determine that teachers who activate students' prior knowledge before reading will enhance their students' comprehension.

### **Literature Review**

In this literature review, many significant themes were found that explore the importance of teachers activating students' prior knowledge before reading. First, I will indicate the importance of teachers activating their students' schema to connect information to their prior knowledge. Next, I will specify the significant pre-reading strategies that improve students' reading comprehension. These comprehension strategies will include metacognitive strategies, specifically previewing vocabulary and analyzing text structure. Lastly, I will discuss the importance of teachers scaffolding students' learning. Research identifies that teachers should activate students' prior knowledge before reading by scaffolding and using pre-reading strategies to improve their comprehension.

### **Activating Students' Prior Knowledge**

Before reading a text, students need to decide the purpose of reading to activate their prior knowledge (Houtveen & Grift, 2007; De Corte, Verschaffel & Ven, 2001; Wangsgard, 2010; Wei-Fan, & Chung-Pei, 2011). According to Brandao and Oakhill (2005), prior knowledge, also termed word knowledge or background knowledge, is what a person knows about the content of the text. The term schema also relates to the term prior knowledge because a person's schema is what already is already known about the world (Gregory & Cahill, 2010). Readers are expected to convey their knowledge in order to fill holes within the text to construct an understanding of the text. Students need to use their prior knowledge in narrative as well as in expository texts.

In a narrative text, students struggle making text-to-self connections and it has a negative impact on their comprehension. In the research of Mcnamara, Ozuru, and Floyd (2011) and Perrusi, Brandao, and Oakhill (2005), they found that in narrative texts students often use the text as the main basis of information, but they both came to an understanding that students who comprehend information further used their prior knowledge. In the study of Perrusi et. al. (2005), students had difficulty in making appropriate use of their information provided in the text and overused their prior knowledge. The study was based on young readers (7-8 year olds). Perrusi et. al. (2005) found that over reliance on prior knowledge was not a problem, only 6.46% of the children's responses were derived from their prior knowledge. However, the researchers also found it is important to teach students how to use their background knowledge as a reading strategy. Correspondingly, in the study of Mcnamara et. al. (2011), researchers worked with students in the fourth grade (9-11 year olds) who were expected to make inferences on their own. Making inferences depends on background knowledge, and if the reader does not have the prior knowledge, inferences are likely to be unsuccessful. Successful comprehension of narrative texts depends on the reader's knowledge about the world and specific areas. Prior knowledge in a narrative passage is a different type of knowledge than the one related to informative texts (Perrusi, et. al., 2005). Narrative texts reflect on the common knowledge about everyday social experiences and people's motivation, goals and actions that are activated. In the case of an informative text, more specific and factual knowledge will be activated.

In an informative text, students need prior knowledge of facts and evidence of explicit information. The additional prior knowledge the reader devises before reading, the better the student can connect to the information (Toboada & Guthrie, 2006). Looking at the research based on expository texts, the studies were consistently conducted with students in the

intermediate grades (Corte, Versaffel & Ven, 2001; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010; Dymock & Nicholson, 2010; Rupley & Slought, 2010). When students enter the upper elementary grades, students are required to read more textbooks and informational texts to learn, but the reading can be difficult due to the higher-level vocabulary and concept based content (Corte, Versaffel & Ven, 2001; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010; Dymock & Nicholson, 2010; Rupley & Slought, 2010; Tobaada & Gunthrie, 2006). Research on students' background knowledge in expository texts enables them to develop, expand, and refine words within the context of information (Rupley & Slough, 2010). Vocabulary knowledge is progressive and is associated with background experiences, which increases the conceptual representation of words in expository text. It is found that activating the background knowledge of vocabulary in expository texts is significant because these texts contain words that are challenging, which students may not have personally experienced (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010). In an expository text, there is a great deal of vital information, consequently the activation of students' prior knowledge is important using vocabulary and questioning. In the study of Dymock and Nicholson (2010) and Rupley and Slough (2010), research was conducted in the intermediate grades within the subject of science. In both studies, it was established that there is an importance of teachers addressing the needs of all students' and engaging them in science through the activation of prior knowledge in vocabulary. In the study of Dymock and Nicholson (2010), students' prior knowledge was activated by asking questions based on vocabulary words the student would come across in the text. The teacher provided the students vocabulary through questioning. Before reading, students were asked to describe, analyze, and share characteristics of the key words. Students in the experimental group did better because there was an understanding of the information before reading compared to the group who did not have their prior knowledge activated. In the study of

De Corte et. al. (2001), non-traditional texts were used and the researchers found the same outcome. In their findings, information within the students text in the upper elementary grades is different and difficult, therefore immersing them in a learning environment based on interactive instructional techniques is essential. Within this study, De Corte et. Al (2001) found the importance of activating prior knowledge by telling the students to ask themselves “What do I already know about this topic?” and writing important words down before reading (p.536). It was found that activating the background knowledge of vocabulary in expository texts was significant because expository texts contain words that are challenging and students may not have personally experienced (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010). In expository text, there is a lot of vital information; therefore the activation of students’ prior knowledge is important using vocabulary and questioning.

Additionally, students working cooperatively together leads to students activating each other’s prior knowledge (Wei-Fan & Chung- Pie, 2011). In the study of Wei-Fan and Chung-Pei (2011), it was concluded that students who worked in collaborative learning groups capitulated the best results and the learning environment was proven the preferred group. The researchers found that prior knowledge played a significant role in the students learning achievements within a collaborative learning environment. Students who worked in heterogeneous groups were found to have different experiences and prior knowledge. Therefore, the students were able to work together to activate each other’s knowledge, and it resulted in students discussions that lead to higher level of knowledge. Overall, Wei-Fan and Chung-Pei (2011) concluded that collaboration helps students activate prior knowledge that leads to increased reading comprehension.

It is apparent that activating students’ prior knowledge is more than telling students what the story is about, because students require questioning to stimulate what is already known.

Comprehension is more successful and deeper if the reader activated relevant knowledge with information that is in the text (Mcnamara et. al., 2011). Therefore, questioning prior to reading will allow students to construct a high standard of coherence for understanding (Taboada & Gunthrie, 2006). Research found the overall the effect of knowledge is greater for informational texts than for narrative texts (Corte, Versaffel & Ven, 2001; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010; Dymock & Nicholson, 2010; Rupley & Slought, 2010; Toboada & Gunthrie, 2006). Student's learning also occurs when students work in a cooperative learning environment, students activated each other's prior knowledge. However, it is evident that there is more of a need for activation of students' knowledge in an expository than in a narrative text, students' need the foundation before reading in order to fully comprehend a text.

### **Pre-Reading Strategies to Improve Students' Comprehension**

Reading strategies are methods or procedures readers may use to gain a better understanding of what they are reading. Once readers learned to utilize effective reading strategies, they can apply the strategies regularly depending on the demand of the text (Wangsgard, 2010). In the study of Wangsgard (2010), it was found that non-effective readers did not apply strategies as they read a text instead the non-effective readers saw it as a hindrance rather than learning something new. The effective readers understood when and how to use reading strategies before, during, and after reading. Pre-reading strategies help the reader effectively understand the content of the books to better comprehend the material. These pre-reading approaches include metacognition strategies and specifically, previewing vocabulary and analyzing text structure.

Metacognition is a concept that provides insights into learners' awareness and exclusive control of knowledge construction (Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill & Joshi, 2007;

Michalsky, Mevarech & Haibi, 2009). It is concluded that metacognition strategies have a positive effect on students' comprehension. In the study conducted by Michalsky et. al. (2009), the experimental group of students were provided metacognitive strategies before reading scientific texts. The control group students were not presented the same metacognitive reading strategies. Michalsky et. al. (2009) concluded that students who received metacognitive instruction attained a higher level of scientific literacy than students who were not exposed to metacognitive strategies. Similarly, the research of Boulware-Gooden et. al. (2007) found that students who were in the group that worked on metacognition strategies had 20% gains in reading comprehension. The metacognitive reading comprehension instruction significantly improved the academic achievement of the students over the control group. Additionally, the study of Houtveen and Grift (2007) established that improvements in metacognitive skills lead to better results in reading comprehension. In the researcher's outcome, there is evidence that reading comprehension can be learned through metacognitive knowledge. Proficient readers use one or more metacognitive strategies to comprehend text (Boulware-Gooden et. al., 2007). Metacognitive strategies can be, but are not limited to, previewing vocabulary and analyzing text structure. The use of metacognition strategies helps students to think conceptually to better their comprehension (Boulware-Gooden et. al., 2007).

Many students lack sufficient vocabulary knowledge, as well as the ability to adequately use reading strategies to build meaning (Miller & Veatch, 2010). Adding explicit vocabulary instruction can build students' knowledge and comprehension prior to reading (Hawkins, Musti-Rao, Hale, McGuire & Hailley, 2010). The research of Hawkins et. al. (2010) proved that adding vocabulary previewing before reading led to the highest performance levels on the vocabulary-matching task and in the comprehension section. The findings of this study showed that adding

in previewing of key vocabulary terms before reading helped the students understand reading material better. Correspondingly, the study of Corte et. al. (2001) also found when teachers clarified difficult words before reading by providing the meaning through synonyms, descriptions, or a definition students scored significantly higher than student who did not receive the same strategy. The systematic and intensive use of highly interactive instruction of strategies allowed students to apply the vocabulary during reading to improve comprehension. Corte et. al. (2001) also suggested from the research that clarifying difficult words should be pursued in the earlier grades. Additionally in the study of Hawkins, Hale, and Ling (2011), students showed a higher comprehension level in the vocabulary previewing experimental group. As students' vocabulary knowledge increases, so does their capability to construct implication from text. It was established that students, who were able to preview the vocabulary, enhanced a positive effect in reading comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge is developmental and related to background knowledge, teachers need to broaden their students' word knowledge in order to better comprehend texts (Rupley & Slough, 2010).

Analyzing text structure is the ability to analyze text through the use of looking at keywords, subheadings, graphs, charts, labels, and other text features that can reveal the structure the writer is using (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010). The knowledge of an expository text will support their comprehension. In the study of Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2010), students were to perform a text feature walk to activate their knowledge and to anticipate the information. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2010) found that students in the intermediate grades had difficulty because the higher-level texts lacked pictures, which hindered students to complete a picture walk; therefore, the study was conducted on text feature walks. Text feature walks include having the students look at the contents, index, glossary, headings, bold words, sidebars, pictures, and



captions before reading to find information that would activate their prior knowledge. The research found that students who not only conducted a text feature walk and wrote predictions did better than the students who only had their prior knowledge activated and students who just read (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010). Interestingly, students who were only asked to activate their prior knowledge without looking at the text scored lower than students who just read. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2010) results concluded that students who do a feature walk are able to learn more from reading the text. Consistently, in the study of Dymock and Nicholson (2010), the researchers had the students use the text structure in order to improve students' comprehension. It was accomplished by providing students a web that need to be filled based on the title, subheadings, graphs, figures, and other cues to help them. When students filled out the web prior to reading, students were able to summarize and understand the material better than the students who did not have a web to fill out. The web not only organized the students' thoughts, it helped them have an idea of the topic before reading.

It has been found that reading strategies are important to students' comprehension. On the contrary, the study of McKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009) determined students who were provided and used strategies did worse on comprehension the comprehension section than the students who were provided content instruction before reading. Students in the experimental group were provided reading strategies to use before, during and after. The control group was not provided with strategies. The result of the study concluded there was no difference between student who were provided strategies and students who were not. The lack of difference suggests that the strategies approach did not provide students an advantage for applying the specific strategies independently. Knowing when and how to use appropriate strategies during the reading process will help readers to solve reading problems and construct meaning from the text

(Law, 2008). In the study of Law (2008), it was revealed that student awareness their own strategies usage is the most important factor in predicting students' reading comprehension scores. The more efficient readers know and use various reading strategies throughout their reading experience. Law (2008) concluded that students knowing when and how to use appropriate strategies during the reading process will help the reader solve problems and comprehend the text.

Teachers also have an effect on students' comprehension. In the study of Dobler (2009), it was found that teachers need to have an awareness and knowledge of the strategies they use when reading because it has an effect on how teachers instruct comprehension. Not all teachers have positive experiences of reading, therefore these experiences is an incentive to create a positive reading environment. In the findings of Dobler (2009), it was consistent that teachers need to become more aware of strategies they use and through professional growth teachers can discover ways that will positively affect students who do not learn the same way. Dobler (2009), confirmed the vast influence that teacher have on their students' reading comprehension.

It is apparent that the most imperative objective of reading is comprehension; it is the reason that we read (Scharlach, 2008). Reading strategies are methods or procedures readers can apply a better understanding of what they are reading (Wangsgard, 2010). Readers may acquire knowledge about various reading strategies, which will help them comprehend the text, but readers need to know the strategies and be willing to put them into use (Kolic-Vehovec & Bajanski, 2006). It is crucial that teachers provide reading comprehension instruction every student to improve comprehension, regardless of a student's achievement level (Scharlach, 2008). Teachers often struggle with teaching reading comprehension strategies due to the

complexity and the fact that every student is different. Teachers can scaffold their students' prior knowledge through the use of reading strategies to improve comprehension.

### **Scaffolding Student Learning**

For the duration of scaffolding, a teacher provides the support needed to assist a student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information (Scharlach, 2008). An imperative aspect of scaffolding instruction is that scaffolding is provisional and as the learner's ability increases, the teacher's role lessens until the student is able to complete the assignment independently. The goal of scaffolding is to aid students in becoming autonomous learners. Scaffolding also is considered to support the functioning of students' cognitive or motivational process during instructional activities (Lutz, Guthrie & Davis, 2006). After looking at different studies, it was found that there is a process of scaffolding strategy instruction. Teachers' first work with their students to explicitly instruct the strategy provided, next teachers model the action, eventually there is a gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the student, and lastly students independently use the strategy (Houtveen & Grift, 2006; Pilonieta & Medina, 2009).

In the study of Houtveen and Grift (2006), it was established that students' who were in the experimental group that received scaffolding instruction from their teachers had significantly better results on reading comprehension than the students who were in the control groups. The teachers demonstrated better metacognition strategy instruction and devoted more time to their students when the teachers scaffolded the instruction. After the study, Houtveen and Grift (2006) found that an improvement in metacognitive skills leads to better results in reading comprehension. Similarly, in the study of Scharlach (2008) teachers transferred metacognitive strategies by scaffolding. Teachers modeled and scaffolded comprehension strategies in a third

grade classroom, with the goal in mind that students would independently use these strategies to increase their comprehension. The pre-reading strategies included predicting, inferring, and making connection. Based on the results of the study, students not only did better than the control group in their comprehension questions, but the students were able to take home their newly learned knowledge of the metacognitive strategies and use them independently. This research shows the success of scaffolding the students to become more metacognitive readers. Scharlach (2008) found one of the most significant finding from the study is that students that the implication of scaffolding improved reading comprehension for all students, including struggling readers to advanced readers.

Teachers need to explain strategies and their usefulness in order for students to comprehend the text. Teachers can do this through modeling and explicit teaching of strategies (Corte et. al., 2001). In the study of Corte et. al. (2001), the researchers had teachers model different reading strategies that would improve students' comprehension. It was found that students who were put into small groups where the teachers modeled and explicitly taught the comprehension strategies did the greatest on the posttest compared to students who were participated in whole group instruction. When teachers' scaffolded the strategies, 88% of the required strategies were used in the 17 texts. This data shows that when the students were provided the right guidance in learning the strategies students were able to use the knowledge when reading. Corte et. al. (2001) came to conclusion that teachers who foster the acquisition and adoption of skilled comprehension strategies were more successful because instruction was based on interactive techniques.

Additionally, in the study of Lutz et. al. (2006), researchers found the pattern of scaffolding that teachers use plays a large role in facilitating students' engagement. In their

study, the classes with high initial scaffolding levels followed by large reductions in the amount of scaffolding students remain engaged with occasional prompts. Students that had moderate scaffolding had a harder time staying on task. Overall, it was concluded that students gained more reading comprehension in classes that teachers scaffolded students' learning, compared to the traditional classroom. Scaffolding instruction left students more engaged in learning, which lead to a deeper understanding of the material being taught.

An example of scaffolding is reciprocal teaching (Houtveen & Grift, 2006). Reciprocal teaching can be used to teach students how to coordinate the use of different comprehension strategies (Pilonieta & Medina, 2009). In the study of Pilonieta and Medina (2009), the researchers used five phases to perform reciprocal teaching in the primary grade. In order for students to adequately learn comprehension strategies, the transition consisted of, strategy introduction, fishbowl, group to teacher, and independent groups. During strategy inclusion, teachers provide the procedures and knowledge of each strategy. In the fishbowl phase, teachers put students into collaborative groups and model the strategies. The group to teacher phase consists of teachers working with the students in the small groups and students use the strategies with teacher guidance. For the last stage, independent groups, is established once the students become proficient with using the strategy independently. There was a gradual release of teacher instruction. After the study was completed, the results indicated through reciprocal teaching student learned the new strategies and were able to use them independently with minimal conflict and disagreements (Pilonieta & Medina, 2009). The use of reciprocal teaching allowed students to become engaged in the application of strategies, eventually the strategies became a routine and there was less of a support needed from the teachers. Reciprocal teaching can be accommodating

to teachers because once the students are doing tasks independently, they can focus on students that need extra help or guidance.

Similar to the study of Pilonieta and Medina (2009) is the study of Sporer, Brunstein and Keischke (2008) in which reciprocal teaching was used to improve students' reading comprehension skills. Their aim was to examine if reciprocal teaching contributes to the acquisition of reading strategies in order to increase students' reading comprehension. In this study, the instructor modeled the four reading strategies, asked students to apply a strategy and give feedback about the quality of strategy used. After the study was conducted, the results were comparable to the study of Pilonieta and Medina (2009). Sporer et al. (2009) indicated that students who were taught through reciprocal teaching did better on the posttest and that the students benefited from this instruction immediately and progressively. Students in the control group showed limited improvement in their reading comprehension, which confirmed the efficacy of reciprocal teaching as a viable tool. Although reciprocal teaching can be challenging on teachers, it is worthwhile; after the study, it was found there was an immense growth seen with students' reading comprehension (Sporer et al., 2009).

Reciprocal teaching can be utilized in groups. In the study of Pilonieta and Medina (2009) and Sporer et al. (2009) correspondingly researched reciprocal teaching through the use of small groups. After teachers modeled and implemented the reading strategies that they would have their students use, students were grouped to practice the strategies. In the study of Sporer et al. (2009), students were not only in small groups, but there also was an experimental pair group. It was found that students who were provided reciprocal teaching in pairs did not do as well as the students who performed the task in a small group. However, the students in pairs still did better than the students who did not receive reciprocal teaching at all. The researchers concluded

that students in small groups had more people to discuss the tasks rather than paired students were more systematic in doing the work and did not think as abstractly. In the research of Pilonieta and Medina (2009), students working in groups used the strategies to engage in a discussion and jointly construct and enhance one another's understanding of the text. It was also found that students in the primary grades were able to work collaboratively to help increase their comprehension during reciprocal teaching.

Recently scaffolding has been associated as a linear process and the teacher adjusts the assistance and the need of the student when necessary while gradually transfer the control to the student who will perform the task independently (Cumming-Potvin, 2007). There are different variations of scaffolding, similar to reciprocal teaching. Cumming-Potvin (2007) used reading circles as a method to conduct research. Reading circles encourage students to collaborate and think critically while discussing literature. The research was conducted on a student that struggled with reading comprehension, but was engaged during reading circle and other literacy practices that extended beyond the classroom. It was found that scaffolding is not just limited to modeling from their teachers; students can be scaffolded by their peers through the use of reading circles. In the reading circles, the student was able to benefit from the social interaction and tasks that were scaffolding from the student's peers.

Scaffolding is teachers providing students a temporary support that gradually transfers to the student (Scharlach, 2008). Metacognitive reading comprehension strategies can be difficult for students to use independently without learning them explicitly. Using scaffolding in the classroom allows students to explicitly learn about the strategies, see the strategy modeled and use the strategies independently. With the institution of scaffolding, the end outcome will be an advantage for teachers because students will use the information independently and the teachers

will have more time to work with students who need extra help. Scaffolding can be used through reciprocal teaching, reading circles and in small groups of students. Reciprocal teaching is accomplished through explicit teaching, modeling, gradual release of dependability on the teacher, and eventually the student using the information independently (Pilonieta & Medina, 2009).

Readers are expected to convey their knowledge in order to fill holes within the text to construct an understanding of the text (Gregory & Cahill, 2010). Comprehension is accomplished by teachers activating their students' schema in order to connect the new information to their prior knowledge. Prior knowledge needs to be activated in narrative texts as well as in expository texts. Students need to use metacognitive strategies including, previewing vocabulary, and analyzing text structure, to begin thinking about the text information before reading. Students can learn these strategies through teachers scaffolding to learn these strategies. The research indicates that teachers should activate students' prior knowledge before reading by scaffolding and using pre-reading strategies to improve their comprehension.

## **Method**

### **Context**

Research for this study occurred at Beach (pseudonym) Elementary/Middle School in the city of Laker (pseudonym). Laker is a large city located in Western New York. Within the Laker Central School District, there are 31,653 students enrolled within the 62 school including Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (New York Department of Education, 2010).

Beach Elementary/Middle School holds students in grades K-8. There are 621 students altogether who attend this school. There are 59 students in Kindergarten, 65 students in first grade, 58 students in second grade, 64 students in third grade, 70 students in fourth grade, 65



students in fifth grade, 53 students in sixth grade, 102 students in seventh grade, and 85 students in eighth grade. Beach Elementary/Middle School has a 93% annual attendance rate. During the 2009-2010 school year the ethnic make-up of the school was: 88% African American, 7% Hispanic or Latino and 4% of the student population were Caucasian. At Beach Elementary/Middle School, 489 students which make up 79% of the student population are eligible for the free lunch program and 39 students which make up 6% of the student population receive reduced lunch. The student population that is limited English proficient is only 7 students or 1%. There are four teachers and three classes at each grade level; this includes two general education classrooms at each grade level and one special education classroom. There are also two self-contained classrooms, one at the elementary and one at the secondary level. Beach Elementary/Middle School devises one special education classroom at each grade level. These classes usually consist of about ten students. The special education teachers in seventh and eighth grade rotate with their students and give them the support they need in all of their content area classes. Kindergarten is the only grade level that has English Language Learners (ELL) and there are 12 ELL students this school year (2011-2012). Beach Elementary/Middle School also has two self-contained classrooms. The parent/community involvement in the school is provided throughout the school year; however attendance is an obstacle that the district struggles with. Teachers and administrators put on a “Family Fun Night” three times a year, which allows parents and children to play games, go swimming and enjoy refreshments. The school has an open house and curriculum night at the beginning of the school year. Additionally, the school has a 25 book campaign, which staff and students participate in as a way to encourage reading at home. To maximize their effectiveness, the school has recently utilized an automated call system, which allows staff to record a message that will call all members of the school

community to inform them about upcoming events. Finally, a school-wide newsletter is sent out once a month to families with children who attend Beach Elementary/Middle School.

In the classroom that the research was conducted, Mrs. Read's (pseudonym) 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom holds 22 students that are between seven and eight years old. The classroom is made up of 12 boys and 10 girls. The classroom ethnic origins are all African American. The students had Mrs. Read in the first grade as well, because the school has a first to second grade loop. Within the classroom, no students receive services or have an IEP. Two students receive RTI support for reading.

### **Participants**

Mrs. Read is a general education classroom teacher in the second grade. She has been teaching for five years in the first grade and this is her second year in the second grade. Mrs. Read has a dual certification in special education and childhood education and her masters in literacy. Within the daily routines, Mrs. Read has reader's workshop, independent reading centers, guided reading groups and writer's workshop.

In this study, I worked with three general education students that are at-level in reading. The three students' ethnicities are all African American. Mrs. Read uses Fountas and Pinnell to assess her students' reading level. The three students who I worked with in Mrs. Read's class read instructionally at Level K. None of the students have additional instruction outside of the general education classroom.

The first student that I worked with is Ranya (pseudonym). She is a seven-year-old girl who is in a general education classroom. She is a calm student and very focused on the tasks that she is asked to do. Ranya likes to make sure everything is correct and takes her time. According

to the questionnaire, Ranya's favorite books are the Fancy Nancy series and she enjoys learning in school especially in math (About me, 2012).

The next student that I worked with is Jow Jow (pseudonym). She is an eight-year-old girl who is in a general education classroom. She is a high energetic student and is very excited to learn. She has a tendency to talk over her peers and is easily distracted. Jow Jow has a hard time staying on task, but when she is focused, she enjoys verbalizing her knowledge. According to the questionnaire, Jow Jow's favorite books are the Fancy Nancy series and she enjoys learning in school especially in math (About me, 2012).

The last student that I worked with is Nay Nay (pseudonym). She is a seven-year-old girl who is in a general education classroom. She is a hard working student who is very excited to learn new things and enjoys speaking aloud when she knows the information. According to the questionnaire, Nay Nay's favorite books are the Fancy Nancy series and she enjoys reading and working on math (About me, 2012).

### **Researcher Stance**

As a researcher, I hold a degree in Childhood Education (1-6<sup>th</sup> grade). I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College working on my master's degree in Literacy Education (Birth-6<sup>th</sup> grade). I have not had any prior connection to the students preceding this study. I have had the chance to volunteer at the school in a previous course in the Literacy program. During this study, I took on the participant passive observer role because I have not had the opportunity to work with these students in the past (Mills, 2011). According to Mills 2011, the passive observer focuses only on data collection instead of being the students' education provider. I worked with the students only to formulate the research and to collect data.

**Method**

This action research project requires a variety of data to be collected. As a passive observer in the classroom, I asked the students to fill out a questionnaire in order for me to get to know them. I then met with the small group of students for three more times for 30-40 minutes as an active role in providing the students with pre-reading strategies. I observed how the students used these strategies along with their reactions in order to find which pre-reading strategies improve students' comprehension. It was also important to obtain the reading strategies that Mrs. Read uses in the classroom to find what the students already know. I created an interview that Mrs. Read received and sent back through Email. The questions determined the procedures that she uses to teach pre-reading strategies to improve her students' comprehension.

Additionally, to complete the comparison study aspect of this action research project, I obtained archival documents of the students' comprehension through questions after they read. Students were provided three different reading strategies before they read. These strategies include previewing vocabulary, textbook features and a think aloud. In previewing vocabulary, students were provided specific vocabulary words that are pertinent to the book. Students then worked on an activity worksheet that supported them in the understanding of each word completely before they start reading. In the textbook feature strategy, students looked at the cover, pictures, charts and sections of the book that will help students to know what they will be reading about. Lastly, students were engaged in a think aloud to activate their prior knowledge to help their understanding. The students were provided questions that they had to think about and answer aloud. For each strategy, students read a non-fiction text at their instructional level. After reading, students answered ten multiple-choice comprehension questions to find which strategies

help them understand the text to their greatest potential. The assessments allowed me to analyze the data to find the dominant strategies to use before reading.

### **Quality and Credibility of Research**

According to Mills (2011), there are four aspects that characterize the validity of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. I ensured the credibility in each of the students and the teacher that I worked with. Mills (2011) defines credibility as, “the researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a student and to deal with the situation” (p. 104). I did this by practicing triangulation where the research is completed through a variety of data sources and different methods with one another in order to cross-check the data (Mills, 2011). I also collected data through documents from students and by conducting interviews. Lastly, I participated in peer debriefing with my critical colleagues who helped me to reflect and ensure the integrity of my research (Mills, 2011).

Transferability refers to the qualitative research that can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings to larger groups of people (Mills, 2011). I presented this by collecting detailed descriptions of the data that is within the context of my study. It was also imperative to develop detailed descriptions of the context in order to make decisions about suitability with other contexts possible.

Dependability is the reliability of the data. I guaranteed dependability through the use of the overlap method and establishing an audit trail. The overlap method is using two or more methods to cross examine the data in order to strengthen the research. Within my research, I used the overlap method by using three types of methods of data collection (Mills, 2011). An audit trail is the process of another individual examining the data collection, analysis, and understanding.

During this process, I had my critical colleagues observe each of my stages of research (Mills, 2011).

Finally, I assured confirmability which is the neutrality or objectivity of the data collected (Mills, 2011). I accomplished this through triangulation by using a variety of data resources. Confirmability was also guaranteed through reflexivity, this is to reveal underlying assumptions or biases that cause research to formulate a set of questions in a particular way (Mills, 2011). I achieved confirmability by reflecting the research I have already completed and the new data to ensure there are no biases. The privacy of the students was assured through these ideologies.

### **Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participants**

To protect the rights of the participants, I began the research by pulling the small group of three students. I asked them verbally for their assent, in order to implement the research. Students, who are in the third grade and below only need to provide me with verbal consent, all three of the students are in the second grade. The students who agreed to participate in the research each took home a consent form for their parents to read and sign. All three students brought back their consent forms signed. Additionally, I asked Mrs. Read to read and sign a consent form as this is mandated so I can conduct the interview and use her knowledge and information in my research. To protect the right of the participants all names are anonymous and identifying marks are removed from the artifacts.

### **Data Collection**

I collected three different forms of data to fulfill the purposes of triangulation. First, I acted as a participant passive observer by working with the students in a small group setting. I provided the students with pre-reading strategies and observed the students how they use the different strategies and their ability to comprehend the information during the reading process. I

took field notes and looked for students' reactions and engagement in each of the strategies before, during, and after reading.

In the enquiring section, I conducted an interview with Mrs. Read and a questionnaire with the students. The interview with Mrs. Read was conducted through Email, which was requested. The interview included questions regarding the demographics of her classroom, assessments she uses in literacy, pre-reading strategies she uses with the students, and her own beliefs in teaching. The questionnaire for the student allowed me to get to know the students and their interests in reading. This gave me more of background knowledge of the students to ensure I am connecting to them.

In the last section, examining, I collected artifacts through student work before and after students read the texts. During the vocabulary previewing pre-reading strategy, students were asked to partake in an activity that involves writing. After reading the three non-fiction texts, students had multiple-choice comprehension questions for each of the texts that they needed to read and answer them to the best of their knowledge. I used this data to analyze which pre-reading strategy improved their comprehension of the text.

### **Data Analysis**

Succeeding the data collection it was essential to organize and score all sections of the data. First, I typed up all of my field notes from the observation in order to organize in a way that would make it comprehensible to analyze. I then scored the comprehension quizzes that I created based on every text. Each book had ten comprehension questions that the students had to use their knowledge of what they read in order to successfully answer the questions. After, I put the data into charts to analyze it to see which strategies students comprehended the text better with.

After the data was collected and organized, I looked at each section of research. I analyzed the data collection by coding and finding patterns to make meaning of everything I had done (Mills, 2011). I first looked at the comprehension quizzes (see Appendices C-E) to see the quantitative data and to see where the students seemed to do better on. Next, I looked at the base of my collection, the observations field notes. The notes identified the main themes that were signified and transpired often. Lastly, I reviewed the questionnaire (see Appendix F) and interview (see Appendix A) to see where they fit into the main themes to back up my evidence.

### **Findings and Discussion**

After the data was collected, I looked through the findings. Within the findings, there was quantitative data that demonstrated the scoring of the students' comprehension quiz and a comparison of each pre-reading strategy. Within the qualitative data, it became apparent that the main themes were, the impact of students' prior knowledge on reading comprehension, positive and negative peer interaction, and gaining confidence in comprehension through questioning. It was assured when the students had prior knowledge on the topic they did significantly better on the comprehension questions. It also was shown that working in a small group positively helped the students because they used discussion to comprehend the topic. On the contrary, it negatively affected the students at times because they were distracted and could not express their knowledge. Questioning also was apparent, which encouraged students to find the information from their peers or during reading.

The quantitative results from the research are shown in Table 1.



Table 1

*Student Results on Comprehension Quizzes*

	Quiz 1	Quiz 2	Quiz 3
Student	Pre-reading Strategy: Previewing Vocabulary	Pre-reading Strategy: Book Feature Walk	Pre-reading Strategy: Think Aloud
Ranya	8/10	8/10	7/10
Jow Jow	7/10	9/10	6/10
Nay Nay	8/10	7/10	1/10

The table is established on each student's results of their comprehension answers on the quiz. Students completed three different quizzes after they participated in the pre-reading strategies and read each text. The quizzes each contained ten multiple-choice questions. Within each multiple choice question students had between two to four choices they had to read and answer. The comprehension questions comprised of vocabulary definitions, inference questions, and within the text questions. The texts the students read were all non-fiction and at the same Fountas and Pinnel reading level. The three different texts were provided by the school data coach and are typically used during guided reading lessons. The first text, *What Magnets Can Do*, gave details about magnet uses and how they connect to children's everyday lives. The second text, *Sea Turtles*, compared different types of turtles and the journey of an egg to a full grown sea turtle. The third text, *Children of Ancient Greece*, discussed lives of children in

ancient Greece along with history of Greece. After reading, students were asked to answer the questions without using the text and base their answer on their comprehension of what they read.

For the first pre-reading strategy, previewing vocabulary, students were provided a worksheet that included definitions of each significant word to the text (see Appendix B). Students read the word, wrote their own definition, drew a picture and connected it to their own knowledge. During this strategy, students worked together with the guidance from me, to complete the worksheet. After finishing the worksheet, students read the text *What Magnets Can Do*. On the comprehension quiz, Ranya and Nay Nay scored eight out of ten questions correctly. Jow Jow correctly answered seven out of ten comprehension questions. Ranya's first missed question was within in the text and an inference question, based on text facts. Jow Jow also missed the inference question and mixed up the two vocabulary terms repel and attract. Looking at Jow Jow's activity worksheet she correctly defined the words repel and attract. She could have answered it incorrectly because she was instructed during the pre-reading strategy and did not have anyone to help her on the quiz. Nay Nay missed an inference question and a within the text question. Overall, all the students had difficulty with inference style questions. Nay Nay and Ranya missed a within the text question, while Jow Jow missed a vocabulary type question. After looking at the student's data it was found that students had most difficulty with the questions that they have to infer and were not directly answered in the text.

The second pre-reading strategy was book feature walk. Students, with my guidance, looked through each page for pictures, charts, bolded titles, the contents, and discussed what they know about the information already. After the pre-reading strategy, students read the text *Sea Turtles*. On the comprehension quiz, Jow Jow correctly scored nine out of ten questions. Her only missed question was an inference question. Ranya scored eight out of ten questions

correctly. She missed two, within the text questions, that were specific to life of a sea turtle. One of the questions that she missed was the same as Nay Nay's missed question. They both missed an "all of the above" answer, where they chose only one of the answers. They could have answered it incorrectly because the student may have not had that type of question format before. Nay Nay correctly scored seven out of ten questions, where the other two questions were based on inferences on sea turtle eggs. After looking at the student's data, the two of the students had difficulty with the structure of the question and inference questions.

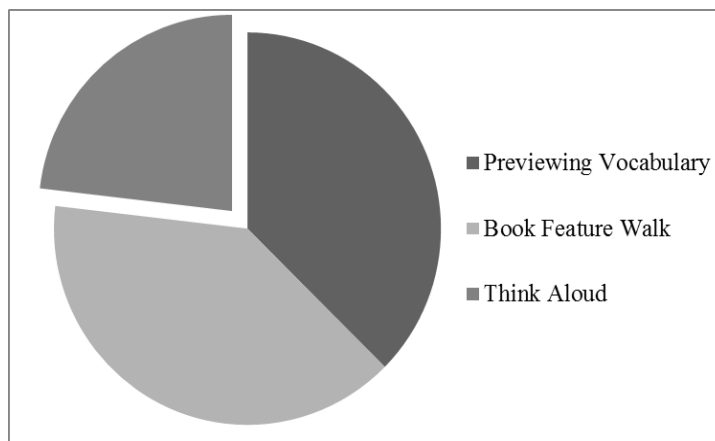
The last pre-reading strategy was the think aloud. Students were provided the text and were allowed to look at the cover to predict and think about their answers. I then asked the students to answer out loud, "What do I know about this topic?" and "What do I think I will learn about this topic?" (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012). After the pre-reading strategy, students then read the book *Children of Ancient Greece*. On the comprehension quiz, Ranya scored seven out of ten. She missed two vocabulary questions and one within the text question. Jow Jow correctly scored six out of ten. She missed two vocabulary questions, one inference question, and a within the text question. Lastly, Nay Nay scored one out of ten answers correctly. The only correct answer from Nay Nay was a vocabulary question on the Olympics, in which she may have prior knowledge of this information already. After looking at the student data, students had difficulty with vocabulary questions and inference type questions. Nay Nay only correctly answered one of the questions correctly. There could have been environmental circumstances that took away from her focusing on reading and on the quiz. I did watch her rush through the reading because she saw Nay Nay finish the text.

Looking at the students' data it was found that students had the most difficulty answering inference type questions and it was evident in all of the pre-reading strategies. This difficulty

could be evident because the students may have not encountered inference questions prior to this study. Students in the last pre-reading strategy had the most difficulty on the vocabulary type questions. This difficulty could be because they have not seen the words beforehand. The students did the best on the within the text questions. This finding could be apparent because students are typically used to being asked these types of questions.

After looking at the data of each student and comparing each pre-reading strategy, I created a pie chart that shows which pre-reading strategy helped students comprehend the text the greatest. This information is shown in Figure 1.1, comparing pre-reading strategies.

**Figure 1.1. Comparing Pre-reading Strategies**



In the pie chart, previewing vocabulary is the darkest shaded part of the pie and overall students scored 23/30 or 76% of the questions correctly on the comprehension quiz. The book feature walk is the lightest shaded section of the pie and overall students scored 24/30 or 80% of the questions correctly. The think aloud is the medium shaded section in the pie and overall the students scored 14/30 or 47% of the questions correctly.

After looking at the data, students clearly did significantly better on the previewing vocabulary and book feature walk compared to the think aloud. Students did the best in the book

feature walk. They could have done well on this strategy because students were able to look at the text beforehand and to get an understanding of what they were reading. Looking at the pictures and the features of the texts allows students to activate their prior knowledge. Students did better only by a 4% margin in the previewing vocabulary section. This information could be because they were able to look at the vocabulary words before reading to understand what they will be reading about. Understanding the vocabulary before reading, activates students' prior knowledge of the topic and helps their comprehension. Students did inferior by a 33% margin in the think aloud section compared to the book feature walk. Students did not do as well and it could be because students did not have any prior knowledge of ancient Greece. Therefore, when students were asked about what they know without looking at the text features or vocabulary before reading, they had a lot more trouble with comprehending the information. Overall, the book feature walk pre-reading strategy, students did best on the comprehension questions.

### **The Impact of Students' Prior Knowledge on Reading Comprehension**

The first theme that emerged from this data collection was the impact of students' prior knowledge on reading comprehension. Before reading a text, student's prior knowledge should be activated through different reading strategies. The pre-reading strategies allow the reader to think of what they already know in order for them to comprehend new information. The additional prior knowledge the reader knows before reading, the better the student can connect to the information (Tobaoda & Guthrie, 2006). In the observation field notes, it was consistent that students use their prior knowledge of the text, before, during, and after reading. When students had prior knowledge of the informational text they typically did better on the comprehension questions. Students had the most prior knowledge on magnets and sea turtle in which they scored more than 30% higher than the topic that had less prior knowledge on, ancient Greece.

Comprehension is more successful and deeper if the reader activated relevant knowledge with information that is in the text (Mcnamara et. al., 2011).

In the first reading strategy, previewing vocabulary, students were provided a worksheet that gave them the definition of a vocabulary word that they will see in the text. On the worksheet, students had to use their prior knowledge of the vocabulary word to write a sentence on their personal connection, their own definition, and draw a visual association. For each vocabulary word, students worked in the small group as I scaffolded them through the process of learning the new words. The research of Hawkins et. al. (2010) proved that adding vocabulary previewing before reading led to the highest performance levels on the vocabulary-matching task and in the comprehension section. The findings of this study showed that adding in previewing of key vocabulary terms before reading helped the students understand reading material better.

Students in the group that I worked with brought in their own knowledge to understand each term. Jow Jow started the conversation by explaining what she knew about magnets, “Magnets stick to the refrigerator, but not everything sticks” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). She thought of her own house refrigerator and knew that her parents put magnets on to make her paper stick. Nay Nay agreed with Jow Jow and then put her hands on the wall while affirming, “Magnets stick on refrigerators and walls” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). Ranya then agreed and added to the conversation, “Sometimes they stick sometimes they don’t” (Observation field note, March 6, 2012). Ranya understood that not all metals are magnets and this information was supportive in order to understand other vocabulary terms. Ranya added to the conversation, “Magnets can be in many shapes and sizes” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). She then drew different shapes of magnets. Her actions were interesting because I knew that the text had the same sentence with pictures, which she would be able to connect when

reading. After discussing magnets, repel, and attract it was clear that the students had prior knowledge of magnets sticking together and pushing each other away. The next vocabulary word was compass and the students all became excited because they have seen and used a compass before. Nay Nay first drew the visual association of the term and exclaimed, “To remember it I say, Never Eat Soggy Waffles” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012) while correctly drawing the picture of a compass. Being able to draw a correct visual of the term will help her comprehend the selected pages on compasses. The final term that the students learned the definition was electromagnets, when the students first heard the word they all look confused. This term was something they have not seen before but this is positive because the information would activate their knowledge they already have to help them understand the vocabulary word. Discussing the definition directed by Nay Nay, “Electromagnets can be turned on and off” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). They all then drew a visual association of what they thought an electromagnet was. Interestingly they all drew different pictures but they all represented the word correctly. Ranya drew a wire coming across the top of the house and recognized that wires that plug into the house are electromagnets and it allowed her to correctly understand that anything that has a wire can be turned on and off. Previewing the vocabulary before reading the text allowed the students to associate the new learned terms to their prior knowledge. This connection helped the students comprehend the text. Out of a possible 30 points, the students totaled 23 points on the previewing vocabulary section. Looking at the pie chart on Figure 1.1, it was a small percentage less than the book feature walk and a large percentage more than the think aloud. After this observation, it was found that the students understood the vocabulary questions when using their prior knowledge. This research was corresponding to the study of Dymock and Nicholson (2010). In their study, students’ prior

knowledge was activated by asking questions based on vocabulary words the student would come across in the text. Students in the experimental group did better because there was an understanding of the information before reading compared to the group who did not have their prior knowledge activated.

The prior knowledge of the students was also significantly supportive during the second pre-reading strategy, book feature walk. During this strategy, students looked at the cover, pictures, charts, and sections of the book that helped students to know what they would be reading. This strategy was familiar to the students because their classroom teacher does a “picture walk” before reading at this time students “make their predictions and talk about illustrations and different fonts in the book” (Personal interview, March 12, 2012). Students having the familiarity with looking at a text prior to reading could have been the reason students did better on the comprehension questions. Comparing it to the think aloud, in which students did not have the prior knowledge of the reading strategy in which they did better. Though the picture walk is familiar with the students, their classroom teacher typically uses fiction texts and stated, “Non-fiction is very hard for primary students to read. There is a lot of information on the page and they need to understand how to read it” (Personal interview, March 12, 2012). Though non-fiction texts are difficult to read, using a book feature walk is imperative because students are able to see the different features of the informational text. If students visually see the organization of the text and the topic, they will read about the prior knowledge will help them to become successful.

In the book feature walk, the students were very excited to connect their knowledge to the topic. Students first looked at the front cover of the text and read the title *Sea Turtles* and at this time Jow Jow became really excited “I know this I’ve seen them before” (Observation field



notes, March 7, 2012). She had been to the beach the previous summer and came across a sea turtle on the sand. Nay Nay, Jow Jow's cousin, then told the group that she was at the beach at the same time and saw the same turtle, "I was so scared it was gonna get me" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). Jow Jow and Nay Nay are both cousins and had the opportunity to see a sea turtle; this prior knowledge helped them activate their prior knowledge. The students then flipped through the text looking at the pictures, bolded texts and charts. Jow Jow came to a page and said "sea turtles eat grass and live in the ocean I've seen it before" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). Having this prior knowledge allowed her to recognize that there are turtles that live by use and there are sea turtles that live in the ocean, this association was important. Jow Jow seemed to have the most prior knowledge and spoke during most of the lesson for example she told the group that sea turtles "can't breathe under water" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). Ranya did not have the same prior knowledge as the group and she was unsure of a lot of the facts that she indicated. Supportively, Jow Jow had the most prior knowledge of the group on sea turtles after taking the comprehension quiz she received a nine out of ten, which is the highest score of the group and the highest score out of all of the quizzes. Her prior knowledge allowed her to reflect and understand what she was reading. Jow Jow correctly scored nine out of ten questions on the comprehension quiz. Interestingly her only missed question was an interference question that she did not have any prior knowledge on. This information shows students utilizing their prior knowledge positively.

The last pre-reading strategy, the think aloud, the students had the least amount of prior knowledge on the topic, which made it difficult for the students. Student' different factors and prior dynamics shape the knowledge and experience students bring to the classroom (Rupley & Slough, 2010). During the think aloud, the students were allowed to only look at the cover of the

text, and they were asked questions that pertained to their prior knowledge. Students were asked, “What do I know about the topic?” and “What do I think I will learn about this topic?” (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012). Before reading the text, *Children of Ancient Greece*, students did not have very much prior knowledge on ancient Greece. As I first showed the book, Nay Nay tried repeatedly to look through the book to find something she could related to. The think aloud was based on their own knowledge when looking at the cover and the students had a hard time because they did not have an understanding. Nay Nay said when looking at the cover “I used to live in Greece” (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012), not having the prior knowledge of where Ancient Greece is located and not being able to look through the pictures to see that Ancient Greece is not west of Rochester made it difficult for the students to connect. Jow Jow did look at the cover and say, “ancient is something old like 1,000 years” (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012). It made her realize that the book is not about something that was recent. She then said after, “I want to look at the pictures to help me out” (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012). All three of the students were eager to look through the text to see the pictures and connect to their prior knowledge Ranya stated, “This text will be about something old because there are cracks on the statues” (Observation March 13, 2012). She used her prior knowledge of, something that is old has cracks, and it allowed her to relate the picture to the word ancient. Before students were able to open the books to read Nay Nay said, “I’m excited to read this book, it looks good” (Observation March 8, 2012). After the students read the book they took the comprehension quiz; this quiz was significantly lower scored than the first two quizzes. Nay Nay who had limited prior knowledge and connection to the text scored only one out of ten on the comprehension. Looking at Figure 1.1, out of the three students combined they scored 14/30 or 47% of the questions correctly, the students struggled and did not do as well

compared to the other pre-reading strategies. The low scores could be because the students did not have any prior knowledge on ancient Greece. Observing the students' prior knowledge on magnets and sea turtles they identified supplementary information on the topic than on ancient Greece. Therefore, there was a significant difference on quiz.

### **Positive and Negative Peer Interaction**

Using a small group to scaffold the students in using the pre-reading strategies allowed the students to work together to activate each other's prior knowledge and learn from each other. According to Wei-Fan & Chung (2011), the use of collaborative learning strategies yielded the best results amount instructional treatments. Peer interaction can positively and negatively affected each other's learning, though students learned and bounced ideas off one another, some students found it difficult to speak and they were easily distracted.

In each discussion for the three pre-reading strategies, students talked within their group to converse what they know about the information already. This conversation was positive when students could not think of what they knew, and one of the students activated their knowledge. In the first reading strategy, previewing vocabulary, when discussing a compass Ranya remembered that a compass has "N-E-S-W" or "Never Eat Slimy Worms" (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012) and Jow Jow started talking about compass she recognized that there are different sides to a compass "N-W-S-E". She also said, "I used to live in the east side of Rochester now I live in the West side" (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). Nay Nay then said when discussing a compass she stated, "To remember it I say, Never Eat Soggy Waffles" (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012) she then correctly drew the sign of a compass. When discussing electromagnets after Nay Nay and Jow Jow Jow read the definition, they both talked to each other about what an electromagnet was, and Nay Nay then said, "Yes they can be turned on and off" (Observation

field notes, March 6, 2012) and proceeded to draw a picture of a plug knowing that there is an electromagnet used. Jow Jow agreed and looked at her picture then proceeded to draw her own. Working together allowed them to understand the definition and come up with their own visual representation. These findings corresponds to Wei-Fan and Chung-Pei (2011) research in that collaboration helps students activate prior knowledge before reading and it leads to increased reading comprehension.

During the book feature walk students all discussed their knowledge and really worked together to understand the information. Discussion is essential to the success of a text feature walk (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010). When looking at the cover page Nay Nay and Jow Jow were excited about sea turtles, they both went to the beach together and saw one coming out of the water. These details had the students talking together for a large part of the discussion on their about their experience of seeing the sea turtle. As they came to the page with the sea turtle's eggs all of the students were interested and intrigued. Nay Nay stated, "They put their eggs on the beach" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012), and started counting how many eggs there are. Ranya saw the number bolded in the text and told the group that "there are 100 eggs" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). On the next page, students looked at a picture with a dog and a turtle that both their colors blended. Interestingly, the students really worked together to figure out why the author chose that picture to put into the text. Ranya said to the group, "the picture showed that some animals blend into others so they cannot be seen" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). Unfortunately, Ranya could not remember the word. Jow Jow then helped by identifying the term, camouflage and gave an example of the army uses it to blend in. It was an insightful conversation and the students worked together to activate each other's prior knowledge on the topic. During this pre-reading strategy, students worked together and

facilitated each other in making the book feature walk successful. The research of Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2010) resemble my results in that they found students that conducted a text feature walk did better than the students that only had their prior knowledge activated as well as students that just read. The researchers concluded that students, who worked together in small groups for the book feature walk, were able to communicate their knowledge through peer connection on what they knew already on the topic using the features in the text.

For the last pre-reading strategy, the think aloud, students were to answer the two main questions after looking at the cover page. In this pre-reading strategy there was a lot less student interaction. The students first read the title of the text, *Children of Ancient Greece*, it brought up some discussion. Jow Jow told Nay Nay that she used to live in “Greece.” It seems that they did not have much prior knowledge on places outside of United States. I did discuss with the students that “Greece” is a country in Europe, and the students nodded their head but still seemed confused. The students both answered the questions on their own with little prior knowledge of the topic. This pre-reading strategy did not bring up much discussion.

Though the pre-reading strategies had positive interaction between the students, it also sometimes was negative. Nay Nay and Jow Jow are cousins, and when Nay Nay tried to speak at times Jow Jow spoke over her which made it difficult observing her. Using two students who were cousins appeared to be negative at times because some of their conversation turned into bickering. Jow Jow was easily distracted from people walking in the hallway and she also had a tendency to distract others. At one point Nay Nay told Jow Jow, “Stop singing I can’t read!” (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). This interaction by the students showed that working with others can divert and take away from concentration which can lead to her not being able to remember the material. Ranya was shy than the other students and when it came to speaking

out loud she typically only talked when no one else had something to say. There was a time that Ranya started to say, “magnets can be...” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012), and she did not finish her sentence because the other two students were excited and spoke over her. Having a personality that is more passive can be challenging because she had a difficulty speaking out loud her thoughts. For the last pre-reading strategy, Ranya did not work in a small group because she was absent during the time I came in, therefore I had to come in the next day to work with her. Her absence was negative because she was not able to discuss the topic with the rest of the students (Observation field notes, March 6-13, 2012). Though there was a negative interaction between the students, the balance between the positive and negative will happen in any situation.

The students’ dispositions were all different. It was positive because they worked well and really pulled each other’s strengths, but at times it was negative because the louder students were distracting and overpower the conversation. Student interaction was a key theme in the research because the small group of students worked together to activate their prior knowledge. Noticeably, the positive interaction compensated the negative interaction. This finding was apparent based on the students’ scores. Looking at Figure 1.1 comparing pre-reading strategies, during the book feature walk students scored an 80% and in the previewing vocabulary they 76% in which most of the interaction was evident. In contrary to the think aloud in which students scored 47% of the questions correctly. Students did significantly better on the comprehension questions in the previewing vocabulary and book feature walk strategies, in which students had most interaction.

### **Gaining Confidence in Comprehension through Questioning**

The last theme found in the observation of the students was students gaining confidence in comprehension through questioning. Each pre-reading strategy students asked a lot of

questions that pertained to the topic of the text, and the more questions they asked, the group seemed to add to the context of their conversation. Additionally, after a student asked a question that was not answered from another student, they were excited to find the answer in the text. For example before reading, Nay Nay asked the students, “do sea turtles have teeth?” (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012) and not any of the students knew the answer. During reading, she exclaimed, “Oh they use their jaws” (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). Her comment showed that Nay Nay comprehended the information because she asked the question. In the research of Taboada and Guthrie (2006), the results indicated that student questioning accounted for overall discrepancy in student’ reading comprehension. They found that students’ who asked adequate questions understood and comprehended better than students who asked low-level questions. This study was corresponding to my research, in that the greatest amount questions asked was in the feature book walk pre-reading strategy in which students score 80% of the comprehension questions correctly. The least amount of content provoked questions asked by the students was in the think aloud, in which they scored 47% of the comprehension questions correctly.

In the first pre-reading strategy, previewing vocabulary, their questions were more directed at me rather than to their peers. Though magnets were not new information they wanted the assurance that they were correct in their answers. The students had a worksheet in which they had to write their own definition and connect to the vocabulary word through a visual representation. They would ask me before each time they would write or draw whether they were correct in their picture. When discussing electromagnets students questioned a lot because it was a new term for them. Jow Jow and Nay Nay connected that electromagnets can be plugged in and Nay Nay asked, “Can they be turned on and off?” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). The

students all agreed they can be turned on and off because they use switches “like in a light” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). Students questioning shows they are thinking about not only the definition of the vocabulary word but also how it is used in the world. Ranya also asked when discussing repel versus attract “When the magnets side are the same do they attract?” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). This question brought up a discussion and Nay Nay remembered that “N” and “S” attract, but she did not know what the “N” and “S” stand for. When reading the text she then became excited and said, “Oh it means North and South” (Observation field notes, March 6, 2012). Students have prior knowledge and different experiences and that helps them connect to the new information they are learning.

During the second pre-reading strategy, book feature walk, students asked questions about the pictures and how they related to the information. During this observation I found that the student, Ranya, who did not have any prior incident of seeing a sea turtle, asked a lot more questions during the book feature walk than the other two students who have seen a sea turtle before. Few of the questions asked were based on looking at the pictures, for example Ranya asked, “How big are sea turtles?” (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). Ranya asked this question because the size of the text does not parallel the actual size of a sea turtle. Nay Nay showed with her hand a size of sea turtle, thinking that all sea turtles are that size. Nay Nay has seen a sea turtle before, and this prior knowledge may have force her into thinking that all sea turtles are the size that she has previously seen. Ranya then asked “Do sea turtles breathe in water?” (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012) when looking at a picture of a sea turtle putting his head over water. The students thought about that question and uncertainly said that they need to come up for air “like wales do” (Observation March 7, 2012). During reading, Ranya came across the same page and found that sea turtles come up to the surface to breath, she became



excited and told me her findings. Questioning is a great tool students use all the time, but having students find their own answers can be vital for them to understand the question they asked. Nay Nay and Jow Jow who both have experienced seeing a sea turtle at a beach knew a lot of the information; they did seem to be interested and ask about the sea turtle's eggs. Correspondingly to Ranya answering her questions, Jow Jow asked before reading, "How many eggs are there?" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). Then during the reading she answered the question and said, "They have 1,000 eggs" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). Also during reading I saw Jow Jow look at a picture than read the page, and then proceeded to say "Awe that's why" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012). She was thinking about the picture, questioning it, and using the text to find evidence to her answer. It helped her understand the information. Nay Nay was also very concerned about the sea turtle's eggs and said out loud, "They put their eggs in the beach I wonder how many eggs there are?" (Observation field notes, March 7, 2012) and started counting how many eggs there are to find her information instead of looking to me for the answer. During the book feature walk the students seemed to answer their own question, rather looking to the adult to make sure they were correct. The students knew they could use their prior knowledge and the text to find their answers.

In the last pre-reading strategy, think aloud, students were asked two questions that they had to metacognitively think about and answer. This strategy lead to less discussion but the students still asked questions to see if anyone knew information to help them understand the content. Jow Jow first asked frustrated, "Why can't I look at the pictures in the book?" (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012). I told her ahead of time that this pre-reading strategy required the students to think of what they already knew just using the cover and only the book feature walk they could look through the text. It seemed to frustrate Jow Jow because she did not

know a lot about Ancient Greece. Correspondingly, Taboada and Gunthrie (2006) concluded that student questioning is essentially influenced on the student's prior knowledge. Nay Nay then looked at the cover and saw the statue and she said, "Is this really old? It has cracks on it" (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012). She understood that cracks in statues typically mean that the material is older, and this understanding helped her to connect that Ancient Greece is in the past. Ranya worked one-on-one with me because she was absent the original day I came in. She did not ask any questions about the text prior to reading. Ranya answered the think aloud questions quickly, then moved on to reading (Observation field notes, March 13, 2012). The read aloud, both times, was shorter than the other two pre-reading strategies and the students questioned a lot less. It could be because the students were asked the questions and they had to think of the answers themselves rather than them asking the questions.

After looking at the three pre-reading strategies, it was clear that the previewing vocabulary and book feature walk was significantly more successful than the think aloud. The students were asked after the last pre-reading strategy which pre-reading strategy they felt was the best and each answer was different. In the study of Law (2008), it was revealed that student awareness their own strategies usage is the most important factor in predicting students' reading comprehension scores. The more efficient readers know and use various reading strategies throughout their reading experience. Though Ranya did the worst on the think aloud when asked her favorite strategy she said, "The think aloud because you can think about the book before reading. The book was really interesting (*Children of Ancient Greece*)" (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012). The issue is that students at her age may be unsure how to accurately assess their own use of reading strategies. Students might base their enjoyment of the reading strategy based on the topic, not what strategy aids success in their comprehension. Jow Jow did the best

on the book feature walk and she enjoyed that pre-reading strategy the most stating, “I liked looked in through the pages before I read. It helps me to know what the book is about before reading” (Observation field notes, March 8, 2012). She was familiar with this pre-reading strategy and she seemed to be a visual student who used pictures to connect to her information that she was reading, therefore she did the best on this comprehension quiz. Nay Nay enjoyed the book feature walk, though it was her second best comprehension quiz only by a small margin. She said, “I like the feature walk because the author has a lot of details and I can look at them first. By looking at the pictures first I read fluently” (Observation field notes, March 13, 2012). It was interesting that Nay Nay understood fluency and connected that looking at the pictures before allows her to read fluently.

After coding the observation field notes, the three themes that evolved, prior knowledge, peer interaction, and questioning all seemed dynamic in each pre-reading strategy. Though it was evident, students seemed to have more prior knowledge on magnets and on sea turtles compared to ancient Greece and they did considerably better on the comprehension quizzes. Students seemed to have a lot more positive peer interaction and more interaction on the previewing vocabulary and book feature walk rather than the think aloud and it lead to the students doing significantly better. Lastly, students that asked more questions and used their evidence to answer the question in the book feature walk, did better on the comprehension quizzes than the other strategies. Looking at the data and the observations students seemed to enjoy and did considerably book feature walk.

### **Implications**

Through the assessment and observation of the small group of second graders, it has been found that students will benefit from the book feature walk pre-reading strategy the most because

students prior knowledge, peer interaction, and their own confidence in questioning is used to their fullest potential. Not all students learn the same, therefore the book feature walk provides students with various tools to activate their prior knowledge to increase their comprehension.

Teachers need to provide students with the strategy to allow them to gain use in what they already know about a topic and enhance it to their new knowledge. Within these findings, there are several implications teachers can use to improve students' reading comprehension.

Overall in this study students benefited the greatest from the book feature walk because they were able to look at the cover, pictures, charts, and sections of the book that would help the students to know what they will be reading about. This pre-reading strategy activated the student's prior knowledge of the topic and allowed him/her to interact with the other students and discuss the topic that they would be learning about. When the students looked through the book, they gained confidence in what they knew about the topic through questioning to each other and themselves and it allowed them to comprehend the text. The book feature walk allowed the students to look through the text to understand what they would be reading. This knowledge is important because students need to decide the purpose of what they will be reading, to activate their prior knowledge and it will improve their comprehension (Houtveen & Grift, 2007; De Corte, Verschaffel & Ven, 2001; Wangsgard, 2010; Wei-Fan, & Chung-Pei, 2011). Non-fiction texts can be difficult for students to read, therefore looking at the features of the text before reading will allow them to know what they will be reading. In addition to these difficult features, non-fiction texts present important content that students need to know and read in order to fully comprehend (Kelly & Clausen-Grace, 2010). The first implication is teachers need to provide pre-reading strategies to activate their students' prior knowledge. Teachers, activating their

students' knowledge, with a text feature walk allow students to comprehend the important material.

Not only did the text feature walk benefit the student's comprehension, the previewing vocabulary strategy also was of value. Within the previewing vocabulary strategy, students were provided specific vocabulary words that were pertinent to the book. Students then worked on an activity worksheet that supported them in the understanding of each word completely before they start reading. In the textbook feature strategy, students looked at the cover, pictures, charts and sections of the book that helped students to know what they would be reading about. The next implication is that teachers need to look through the student's texts before they read to find words that seem to be difficult and they may not have seen before. It encourages students to connect their prior knowledge to the word to allow them understand, before reading the text. Adding the explicit vocabulary instruction can build students' knowledge and comprehension prior to reading (Hawkins et. al, 2010).

For any pre-reading strategy, teachers need to know the text and the information beforehand. Looking through the text, teachers need to find which information they want their students to know. This implication provides students with a better understanding before reading and it will allow them comprehend the text effectively. Once this is found, the pre-reading strategy can be planned. Using nonfiction text, the information has a lot of higher-level vocabulary that can be difficult for the students. Texts that have the difficult vocabulary words teachers should identify the words and provide them to the students in a previewing vocabulary activity. Within this strategy, students need to not only see the definition of the word they need to connect it to their prior knowledge. Knowing your students, and what they already know, is an important implication in order to find the ample pre-reading strategy. When a teacher looks at the

non-fiction text and knows their student will be able to distinguish the major vocabulary words, they would then be able to decide that the book feature walk would be the better strategy. The book feature walk activates the student's prior knowledge in that, if the content is something they have seen before they would be able to look through the text and connect it to their knowledge.

The last implication is teachers providing their students new pre-reading strategies through scaffolding. Once the teacher finds the pre-reading strategy that is the best for the students, they then can scaffold their students in order to use the strategy to the fullest potential. Scaffolding, allows the teacher to provide the support needed to assist a student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information (Scharlach, 2008). Students need the support from the teacher in order to understand and use the strategy successfully. When the students are able to use the strategy, they will take that information and use it when they read independently in the classroom. Scaffolding allows students to read for comprehension and understand the information the teacher wants the students to know.

Using pre-reading strategies are important for the student's comprehension. There are various implications that teachers need to use before reading, in order for their students to successfully comprehend a text. Teachers need to know the text and the information that they want to students to know before even providing the students with the material. Afterwards, teachers will be able to find the most sufficient strategy that will improve the student's comprehension of the text.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to find which pre-reading strategy would improve student's comprehension. Given that literacy is a social practice and learning occurs when teachers activate their students' prior knowledge before reading, it has been found that students

will benefit from the book feature walk pre-reading strategy the greatest. In these strategies, students' prior knowledge and peer interaction is used the greatest. The previewing vocabulary pre-reading strategy also is very advantageous because it provides the students with knowledge that they will use during reading. Lastly, the think aloud pre-reading strategy is the least favorable because students do not interact with each other and the nonexistence of their own questioning affects them. Teachers, with their knowledge of their students and the texts they can provide their students with the strategy that will allow them to comprehend the content the greatest.

The research I completed was limited in several ways. The small group of students were all girls. Further research should be conducted so that there is no bias in the topics that are chosen for the students. Students had a lot less knowledge of ancient Greece which affected their ability to use the think aloud pre-reading strategy successfully. Also, students have had used a picture walk with their teacher numerous times which is closely related to the book feature walk, therefore they already have used this strategy in the past. Lastly, due to the amount of available texts, students used two science books and one social studies book. It is limiting because the students have less knowledge on social studies topics.

Through this research, I have developed a better understanding of the importance of pre-reading strategies. I was surprised to find that the importance of teachers activating their students' prior knowledge through different strategies is significant to their comprehension. These findings show the importance of teachers knowing the information and their own students before providing the students with a strategy that will benefit their understanding. Comprehension is more successful and deeper if the reader is able to activate relevant knowledge with information that is in the text (Mcnamara et. al., 2011). Using pre-reading strategies that

activate the student's prior knowledge, for instance a book feature walk and preview of vocabulary, will enable students to connect to the content and comprehend the material.



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**APPENDIX A**Interview Questions

- 1) How long have you been teaching?
- 2) How long have you been a teacher at Nathaniel Rochester Community School No. 3?
- 3) What certifications do you hold?
- 4) What are your job responsibilities?
- 5) What are the demographics of the classroom? (*number of students, age, race, gender, students who receive services, what services they receive, IEP's, ESL students*)
- 6) What types of reading and writing assessments do you use in the classroom?
- 7) How do you assess comprehension?
- 8) How do you teach comprehension strategies?
- 9) What pre-reading strategies do you teach your students?
- 10) Which pre-reading strategies do you believe work the best?
- 11) Do the strategies differ when using non-fiction texts?
- 12) Do students use the pre-reading strategies independently?

APPENDIX B

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**What Magnets Can Do**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>New Word</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Magnets</u></p> <p>Metals that can attract or pull thing that are made out of iron, steel, cobalt, or nickel</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Personal Connection</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>My Definition</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visual Association</b></p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>New Word</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Attract</u></p> <p>When two like poles stick together</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Personal Connection</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>My Definition</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visual Association</b></p>

<p><b>New Word</b></p> <p><u>Electromagnetic</u></p> <p>When an electric current runs through a wire, the iron bar inside the wire becomes a magnet.</p>	<p><b>Personal Connection</b></p>
<p><b>My Definition</b></p>	<p><b>Visual Association</b></p>

<p><b>New Word</b></p> <p><u>Compass</u></p> <p>Shows direction by using a needle that the Earth's magnetic pole attracts</p>	<p><b>Personal Connection</b></p>
<p><b>My Definition</b></p>	<p><b>Visual Association</b></p>

<p><b>New Word</b></p> <p><u>Repel</u></p> <p>The like poles of two magnets push each other away</p>	<p><b>Personal Connection</b></p>
<p><b>My Definition</b></p>	<p><b>Visual Association</b></p>

## APPENDIX C

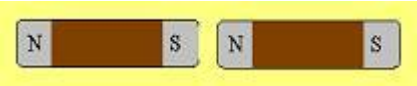
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_


**What Magnets Can Do**

Directions: Circle the correct answer for the following multiple choice questions

- 1) What is a Magnet?
  - a. Wood
  - b. Copper
  - c. Metal object that attracts other metal objects
  - d. An object that attracts the sun and trees
  
- 2) Magnets have two poles. What are they?
  - a. North and South
  - b. Red and blue
  - c. South and East
  - d. East and West

- 3)  These magnets will
- a. Attract
  - b. Repel

- 4) The compass needle points toward the Earth's
- a. Center
  - b. North Pole
  - c. South Pole

- 5)  These magnets will
- a. Attract
  - b. Repel

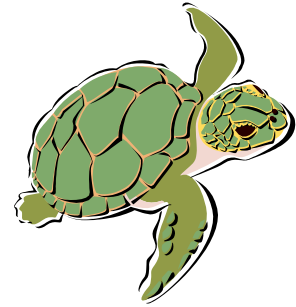


- 6) What does repel mean?
  - a. Magnets move toward each other
  - b. Magnets do not have magnetism
  - c. Magnets move away from each other
  
- 7) What does repel mean?
  - a. Magnets move toward each other
  - b. Magnets do not have magnetism
  - c. Magnets move away from each other
  
- 8) Which object would not attract a magnet?
  - a. Scissors
  - b. Nail
  - c. Water
  - d. Screw
  
- 9) Can an electromagnet be turned on and off?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
- 10) What is NOT a hidden magnet in your home?
  - a. Computer
  - b. Refrigerator
  - c. Chair
  - d. Telephone

## APPENDIX D

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Sea Turtles**

- 1) Where do sea turtles live?
  - a. Lakes
  - b. Pond
  - c. Ocean
  
- 2) Do sea turtles have teeth?
  - a. Yes, they have many teeth
  - b. No, they use their jaws to grab and bite food
  
- 3) Sea turtles eat
  - a. Seaweed
  - b. Fish
  - c. Crab
  - d. All of the above
  
- 4) How big are the largest sea turtles?
  - a. 300 pounds
  - b. 8,000 pounds
  - c. 1,000 pounds
  
- 5) Can sea turtles hide in their shells?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
- 6) Where do sea turtles lay their eggs?

- a. In the sea
  - b. On land
- 7) What can happen to the sea turtle eggs?
- a. Animals and people dig them up for food
  - b. Are always safe
  - c. The mother stays with them and keeps them safe
- 8) Are baby sea turtles safe after they are hatched?
- a. Yes, they all go right to the water safely
  - b. No, other animals can attack them
- 9) Why do you think it is hard for sea turtles to move on land?
- a. Their legs are too short
  - b. Sea turtles have flippers instead of legs
  - c. They never learn how to walk
- 10) Where do sea turtles put their eggs?
- a. A nest in the beach
  - b. In the water
  - c. In the grass by the water

## APPENDIX E

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Children of Ancient Greece**

- 1) What is a temple?
  - a. A place for children to play
  - b. A place that people come to pray
  - c. It is a place where people eat food
  
- 2) Did Ancient Greeks believe that education was important?
  - a. Yes, they were taught at a very young age
  - b. No, they didn't believe in learning
  
- 3) Who went to school?
  - a. Boys
  - b. Girls
  
- 4) What were girls taught to do by their mothers?
  - a. Run fast and stay fit
  - b. Spin thread and sew
  - c. To paint and draw
  
- 5) What were the houses made out of?
  - a. Wood
  - b. Brick or stone
  - c. Metal

- 6) Who was **very** important to the Greeks?
  - a. Their president
  - b. Gods and goddesses
  - c. The mayor
  
- 7) Were the boys and girls allowed to play games?
  - a. Yes, they played board games and with other types of toys
  - b. No, they were only allowed to learn
  
- 8) What are the Olympics?
  - a. A hard test in school
  - b. Contest of sports in skills
  - c. A series of books that they read
  
- 9) Where did they build their houses?
  - a. Around a courtyard
  - b. In the woods
  - c. Around the presidents house
  
- 10) What did the Greeks wear over their clothing?
  - a. Jackets
  - b. Fur coats
  - c. Cloaks

## APPENDIX F

**About Me**

I have \_\_\_\_\_ eyes. My favorite color is \_\_\_\_\_.

Today I am wearing \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite TV show is \_\_\_\_\_. My  
favorite movie is \_\_\_\_\_. Some of my  
friend's names are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

and \_\_\_\_\_. The best book I ever read  
was \_\_\_\_\_.

The thing I like to do most  
of all is \_\_\_\_\_. When I  
get mad, I usually \_\_\_\_\_.

One  
thing that I really like about school is \_\_\_\_\_.

The subject I am the best at is \_\_\_\_\_.

The subject I am the worst at is \_\_\_\_\_.

You should know that I \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_