

Explicitly teaching Grade 5/6 students who have reading comprehension difficulties to formulate questions, create self talk and speculate relevant answers before, whilst and after reading increases their level of comprehension of factual texts.

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ABSTRACT

The main aspect of this project was to look at the development of a specific comprehension strategy to enhance students reading comprehension. Reading is not just about decoding print but understanding, comprehending text. Many students believe they are good readers because they can accurately decode words. Comprehension involves reading, understanding, making relevant links between ideas in the text and putting this into context.

The hypothesis investigated is that explicitly teaching Grade 5/6 students who have reading comprehension difficulties to formulate questions, create self talk and speculate relevant answers before, whilst and after reading increases their level of comprehension of factual texts. In order to develop questioning comprehension a series of ten lessons were conducted over a three week period. Each of these lessons included teacher modelling, verbalising by teacher and students, practice and reflection on the lesson and learning.

This study compared the results of two groups of grade 5/6 students, the control group which received no explicit instructions and the target group who were taught explicit questioning strategies. The target group students were matched as closely as possible to students who then compiled the control group. Factors considered when matching target with control students were age, grade level and pre test Torch scores. Pre-testing and post-testing was conducted as a means of judging the success of the explicit teaching. Improvements in scores for the target group students were significantly better than those of the control group.

The results suggest that teaching the comprehension strategy of questioning using the 'RAT' technique, read, ask and think, is profitable with factual text, and should be explicitly taught to assist students to improve their reading comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Many students at senior primary level have yet to develop a variety of comprehension skills. They may read accurately and decode both fiction and non fiction texts but often do not comprehend beyond the literal level. Whilst they are often able to read a text at an age appropriate level they are not able to show a deep understanding of the text. This greatly impacts on their educational progress, especially in subject areas where students are to read non fiction texts as part of their learning. Being unable to comprehend extensively the student often fails to make the necessary links from the sentence to conceptual or topic level. The student often does not elaborate, infer, predict or summarise when reading. Because of this they are unable to link ideas occurring early in the text to those that occur later in the same text. Hence their overall comprehension of the text is impaired.

Reading is more than 'barking' at print. Reading involves the decoding of words as well as the comprehending of the content read, making relevant links between ideas in the text and putting this into context. Harvey (2001) states reading comprehension is the "ongoing process of evolving thinking"(page1) She believes that good readers

carry on inner conversations with text, and that this conversation leads to thoughtful, engaged reading, reading that enhances students understanding, builds their knowledge and develops their insights. Many people cite declines in reading standards as the reason why many students can not comprehend extensively. Hervey (2006) implies that reading standards are not declining but current difficulties in reading are from rising demands for literacy. She states that “This has huge implications for us in our teaching. We need to think carefully about how we are going to equip our students with the strategies to deal with the rapidly changing world of print.” (page 1). Readers should be able to read a passage and retell in their own words. They should be capable of predicting content and possible vocabulary in an unfamiliar text. Readers need to know how to understand the meaning of different types of sentences, simple and complex. Readers should be able to make links between concepts within a text as well as answer a series of related questions. Reading is considered a basic life skill yet it is a complex dimension of Literacy. It can not be taught in isolation in a Literacy program neither can it be ‘caught’. For a student’s reading to be well developed a teacher needs to attend to the ‘craft’ of reading of words as well as the continual development of comprehension skills.

With the advent of early years literacy programs and teaching methods students have gained proficiency in decoding print. They can ‘read’. As students progress through the middle school and later onto the final years of primary school students continue to develop an image of themselves as readers. Many students consider themselves a good reader because they can read fluently, accurately and read troublesome words not realising reading is about comprehending the text as well as reading the words. Some of these students often do not elaborate, infer, predict or summarise when reading, they fail to make the link with content, thus having difficulty comprehending. Van Gorder believes that being able to make up and answer questions about a text is a fundamental comprehension skill and that questioning and the explicit teaching of questioning skills is worthwhile. “My students were reading independently, stopping along the way to question the text, making inferences based on those questions.....I had helped my students become active meaning makers”(2003) (page3)

In order for students to better comprehend text Hervey (2006) suggests that teachers focus on questioning as a comprehension strategy. She believes that teachers need to encourage students to ask questions(of the text) instead of having them answer questions and that by “focusing on questioning as a comprehension strategy is one way to help students become critical and strategic readers”,(page 1). Hervey (2006) believes that “accurate decoding and literal understanding, while important, will not be adequate for today’s literacy demands” (page 1). Many readers can ‘read’ words accurately and answer basic literal questions however reading involves the further development of comprehension skills to include being able to infer, digest vocabulary, make judgments and give opinions.

“Questioning lies at the heart of comprehension because it is the process of questioning, seeking answers and asking further questions that keeps the reader going”, Hervey (2006) (page 1). Readers seem to need to be engaged with the text to comprehend well. Being engaged with the text allows the reader to reflect on what they have read, make sense of it and if necessary clarify the meaning. In order to be engaged with the text the reader should be capable of asking questions of what they have read. These self made questions prompt students to think about the content, expressed facts and opinions. Being unable to ‘question’ the text hinders readers from becoming engaged in reading, thus they are likely to comprehend poorly.

When students experience comprehension difficulties there can be a number of contributing factors. The student may have difficulty paraphrasing after reading, recalling details from the text, or the student may have difficulty generating questions about the read text. The student seems to be unable to make the necessary links from their sentence level knowledge to their conceptual and topic level knowledge. The student appears unable to link ideas occurring earlier in the text to ideas that occur later in the same text. Often the student does not re-read sentences to assist with comprehension.

The present investigation aims to examine the effect of teaching the questioning strategy to a small group of students in their last two years of primary schooling. It is hoped that this will help students further develop their comprehension levels. These students are able to 'read', decode at an age appropriate standard but do not display a deep understanding of text read so therefore experience difficulties accurately answering relevant comprehension questions. These students are able to answer, at times, basic literal questions but appear unable to link ideas occurring earlier in a text to ideas that occur later in the same text. The hypothesis being investigated is that explicitly teaching Grade 5/6 students who have reading comprehension difficulties to formulate questions, create self talk and speculate relevant answers before, whilst and after reading increases their level of comprehension of factual texts.

METHOD

Design

This study uses the OXO design in which the comprehension improvement of students after the explicit teaching of the R.A.T (Read &/ re-read, Ask relevant questions, Think/self talk) technique is monitored for grade 5/6 students who have reading comprehension difficulties. The study compares two groups of students, a target group and a control group.

Participants

Sixteen students from Grade 5/6 level were chosen. Eight students were at grade 5 level, eight students were at grade 6 level. All target group students were part of the same 'multi-age' classroom. These students were considered to be in the 'at risk'/'watch' category for literacy achievement based on the school's beginning of the year testing results and teacher observations from both the current and the previous year's teachers. The testing at the beginning of the year had been conducted either in a one on one situation or as part of whole class testing conducted during the normal classroom literacy program. The formal beginning of the year testing for reading consisted of a grade level appropriate TORCH Comprehension Test and an age appropriate PROBE Oral Reading and Comprehension Test. The levels for both of these tests had been predetermined by the schools Curriculum Co-ordinator.

The target group students had been identified as being students who would benefit from additional assistance in developing strategies to help them understand texts more comprehensively. The control group students were chosen from the remaining Grade 5/6 classes. Student details relating to age, educational profiles etc are outlined in Table 1.

Student	Grade	Age in months	Sex	Educ. Profile.	CEO Assist.	CEO Fund.	Supp. Prog.	AIDE support	Health issues	Group	Torch Pre-test	Ques. Pre-test	Family Sit.	E.S.B.
1	6	144	M	ILP		Yes	RR ERIK	Yes	Depression sufferer	T	40	0		Yes
2	6	152	F	ILP Home ED	Speech Path	Yes	Maths Inter	Yes		T	45	1	Parents Split	Yes
3	6	140	M							T	47	1	Blended family	Yes
4	6	143	M							T	42	6		Yes
5	5	130	M	ILP						T	32	8		Yes
6	5	133	M							T	38	1		Yes
7	5	126	M							T	40	0	Parents Split	Yes
8	5	124	F							T	40	6		Yes
9	6	138	M							C	45	1		Yes
10	6	147	F							C	66	1		Yes
11	6	140	M							C	56	0		Yes
12	6	143	M							C	52	2		Yes
13	5	131	M							C	39	0		Yes
14	5	136	M							C	47	1		Yes
15	5	123	M							C	40	1		Yes
16	5	124	F				R.R.			C	45	2		Yes

Table 1: Educational Profiles for each of the Study Participants

Table Legend:

Educ.Profile.=Educational Profile

CEO Assist.=Catholic Education Office Assistance

CEO Fund.=Catholic Education Office Funding received

Supp. Prog.=Support Programs student has participated in

Ques. Pre-test=Questioning pre-test score

Family Sit.=Family situation re parents

E.S.B.=English Speaking Background

ILP=Individual Learning Program provided for this student

Home Ed.=Home schooled in previous years

Speech Path.=Speech Pathology program provided

R.R.=Reading Recovery program

ERIK=Enhancing Reading Intervention for at Risk Students program

Maths Inter.=Maths Intervention program

T=Target group participants

C=Control group participants

Whilst there are many similarities in the learning profiles of all participants i.e. all from English Speaking Backgrounds, all are grade 5/6 students, several differences can be noted. Some students have received previous or are currently receiving Educational Support Programs, a few students are on Individual Learning Plans. The range in Torch pre-test results as well as the range in ages, even amongst those in the same grade level was apparent. When matching the students in the target group with the control group key factors were considered such as; age; pre-test scores and matching grade levels.

Materials

Various factual texts at 'Instructional' level were used during the teaching lessons. (Appendix 1) Generally during each lesson a new text was introduced to allow for teacher observation of the student's questioning and comprehension achievements. It was felt that by introducing a new text each lesson the students could not rely on information from previous lessons impacting on their current questioning, comprehending ability. The texts chosen were from a collection of reading materials suitable for senior primary, at an instructional level of which there were multiple copies. It was decided to use multiple copy sets so that each child could easily view and re-read passages if needed.

Materials used included; the Torch Comprehension test; Teacher devised questioning test; and various Instructional level factual texts as well as teacher prompt resources, (Appendix 1). In compiling the questioning test several un-related passages were chosen. It was intended that by doing so students would treat each passage separately and not attempt to make links between the passages, thus giving a better indication of their questioning ability. With regard to the selection of the Torch reading comprehension test as there was no directly related test of factual genre (with the pre-test text) it was decided that it would be beneficial to compare results with the original test used in the pre-test activity.

Procedure

Initially a pre assessment session was conducted using both the Torch Test of Reading Comprehension and the teacher devised Questioning test, (Appendix 2). The Torch test varied according to grade level of the students. Grade 5 students were tested using 'Shocking Things, Earthquakes!' whilst the Grade 6 students were tested using 'The Accident'. All participants were tested in the one session under the same testing conditions. An introductory lesson for the target students was then conducted to inform students to the change in classroom literacy procedures as well as to give time to set up book work formats for the explicit teaching lessons.

Ten lessons were conducted with the target students over a three week period; each lesson was of approximately 30-40 minutes duration. Several of the target group students were absent during these explicit teaching lessons. When they returned to school these students participated in the lessons where the group was up to, and other students were asked to 'tell' the absent students what work had been done and what learning had taken place. All the lessons were conducted by myself, the classroom teacher during regular literacy sessions within the classroom setting. The remainder of the students from the class were working independently on various reading tasks during these lessons. These tasks had been devised to involve reading factual texts, answering comprehension questions and then working on the presentation of this new knowledge in any format ready to be presented to the class once all the explicit

teaching lessons were over. The texts chosen for this group complemented with the current Integrated studies unit being studied. Initially the other class students were involved in the same structure as the target group students however because of their higher level of comprehension, greater work efficiency and more independent work level as well as the teachers difficulty in managing three groups whilst conducting explicit teaching with the target group students the teacher decided to create other task for the remainder of the class. This was a much better outcome as the teacher could then focus on the target group students solely and the class members could work at their pace and level to complete their set tasks.

The ten explicit teaching lessons generally included a review period (of previous sessions and learning), teacher modelling, student interaction and practice, and reflection both orally and in written form as well as group discussion. Whilst the lesson formats appear similar there is a gradual progression from reading sentence by sentence to paragraphs to reading pages of text as well as from working aloud, comprehending verbally to reading and comprehending silently.

The teaching procedure for these explicit lessons incorporated various teaching practices as outlined by John Munro's Questioning strategies in the MLOTP (Multiple Levels of Text Processing) model for understanding literacy learning disabilities. Such practices included teaching self questioning, focused teaching, positive feedback and self talk. These practices were adapted for the purpose of the explicit teaching lessons. Each lesson involved the students being taught to generate questions before, during and after reading. These questions were generated aloud initially then moving to internalization of the question process so that they would begin to automatically formulate questions in their head whilst reading text. Question starter prompts were displayed for easy referral by the students (Appendix 1). Focused teaching involved introducing the students to the 'RAT' acronym and technique with the purpose that the students would adopt and constantly use this technique whilst reading. The 'RAT' technique involves the prompts of Read(R) the title, text, illustrations, captions: Ask(A) questions of the text: Talk/Think(T) to yourself, out loud, to others. A graphic depicting a rat with the prompt cues was used and displayed to remind the students of the technique (Appendix 1). Positive feedback was constantly utilised to reinforce to a student when a strategy was correctly applied as well as to build confidence in the students. The teacher tracked conversations with each target group student to ensure interaction as well as a means of informal ongoing assessment. The self talk concept was introduced to students as a model of verbalising what they were doing whilst reading text. Students were encouraged to self talk, to make questions about the text, as well as links between the concepts. Initially students were encouraged to self talk verbally then as the lessons progressed self talk became an 'in your head' activity.

Students in the control group continued to participate in their regular classroom literacy program within their classrooms. At the completion of the explicit teaching lessons all students, both the target and control group students were then assessed using the same materials and procedure used during the pre-assessment tests.

RESULTS

Results indicate support for the hypothesis that explicitly teaching Grade 5/6 students who have reading comprehension difficulties to formulate questions, create self talk and speculate relevant answers before, whilst and after reading increases their level of comprehension of factual texts. The comprehension scores of all students in the target

group show gains in both testing formats: the teacher devised questioning test as well as the formal Torch comprehension test (Figures 1 and 2).

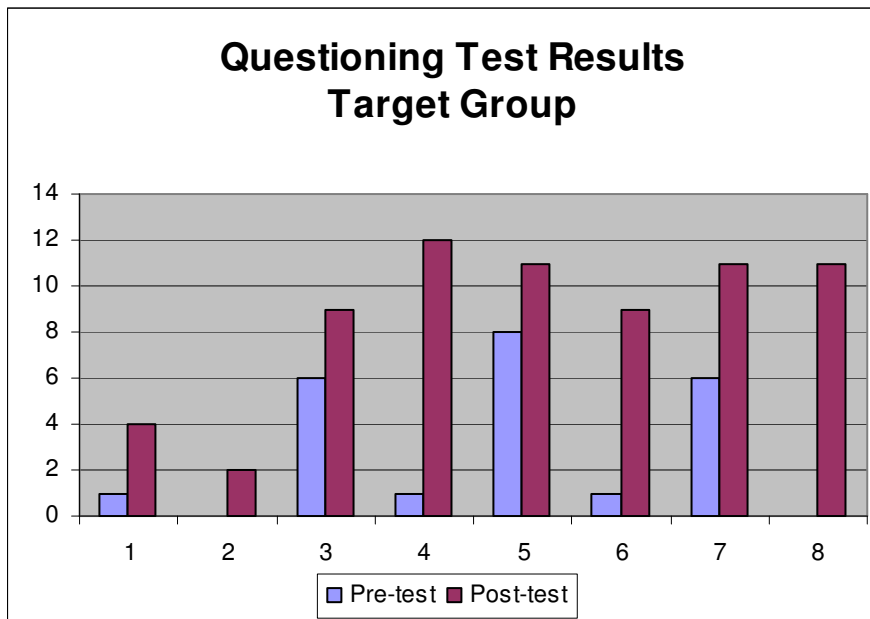


Figure 1: Target students pre and post test Questioning results

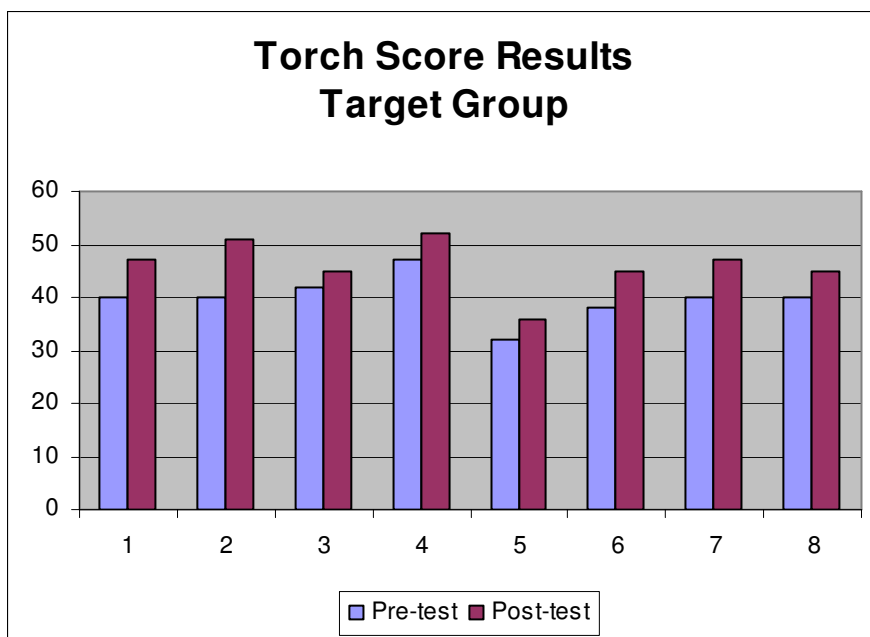


Figure 2: Target students pre and post test Torch Score results

Both these figures show an improvement for each of the target group students in both testing formats. These results show that explicitly teaching reading comprehension via the questioning strategy aided students reading comprehension. When comparing both testing genres the gains in the teacher devised questioning test were significantly higher than the gains in the Torch test results. It could be implied that this is because of the use of everyday language which the students could relate to in the activity as compared with a more complex language in the 'normed' Torch test. Also the Torch test includes several areas of comprehension whereas the teacher devised questioning activity was only analysed in terms of the improvement in students questioning

comprehension, and, as this was the only explicitly taught area of comprehension it could be assumed a notable increase would occur.

Improvements in scores by the target group students were greater than those of the control group as shown through the comparison of the overall pre-test and post-test scores, as indicated in Figures 3 & 4.

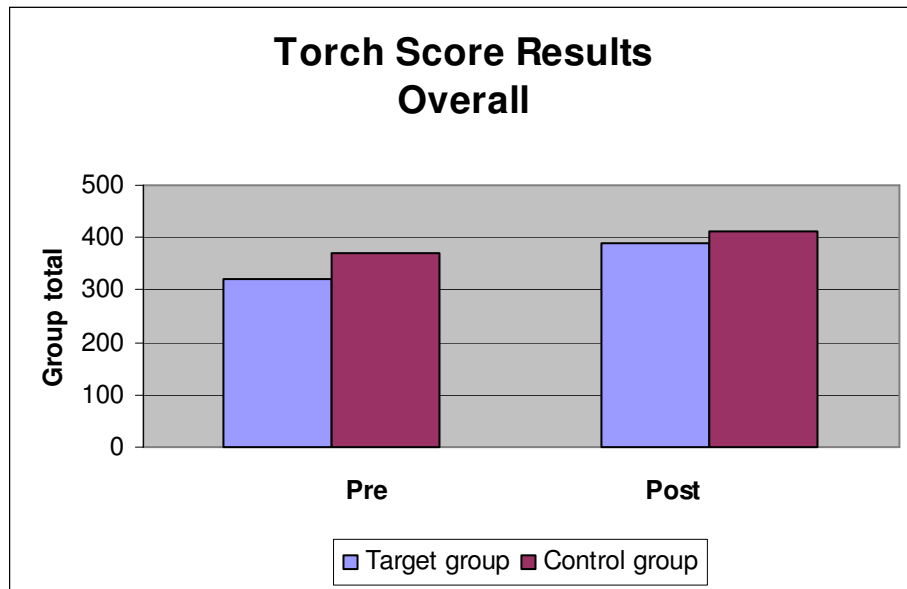


Figure 3: All participants pre and post Torch Score results

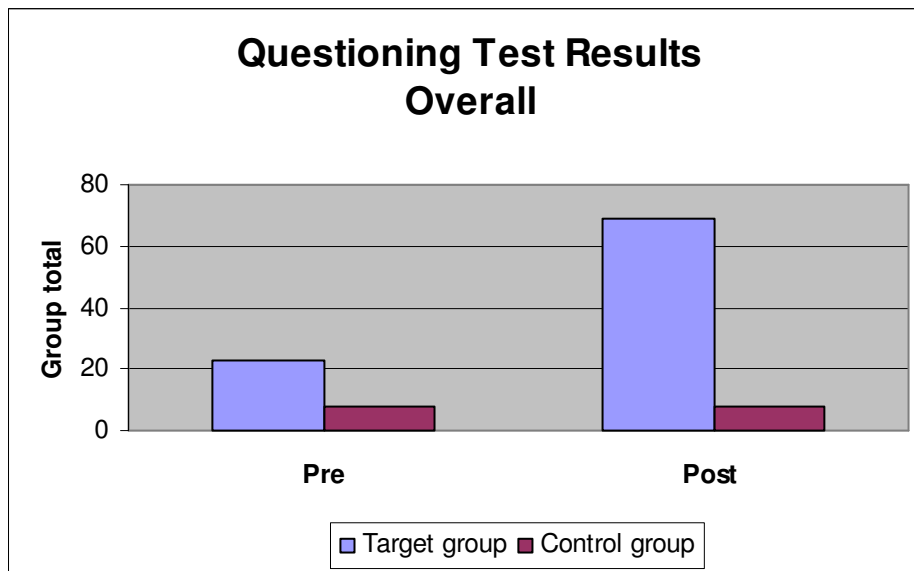


Figure 4: All participants pre and post Questioning test results

It should be noted however that the students in the control group demonstrated higher Torch comprehension scores in pre-testing. Overall the control group showed improvement in comprehension as would be expected considering the variety and depth of classroom literacy programs however gains made by the target group students were significantly better than the control group students.

The target group student's scores showed higher gains in both the teacher devised questioning activity and the Torch test in post testing data. Plausible reasons for this

are that these students were more focused during the explicit teaching sessions, increased attention spans and participation expectations-it is hard to avoid interacting when in small work group and the expectation is clear that all students participate consistently. Through teacher observation it was noted that there was a rise in the number of relevant interactions the students were making. Perhaps this was due to an increase in student confidence, an awareness of teacher expectation or an increase in being able to answer 'correctly'. Another aspect to be considered is the fact that these target group students began at a lower starting point, in terms of overall comprehension pre-testing scores, than the control group thus having more ground to gain. Whilst all target group students showed gains in their scores in both testing genres some were more significant.

Student 1 did not attain a score on the teacher devised questioning test initially; he was unable to formulate any questions, rather just writing statements. Post test results show that he could make two relevant questions. However it should be noted that he attempted all parts including beginning all of them with question starter words. His score does not indicate this as several of the questions were deemed irrelevant. His Torch results show a gain of eleven points from pre to post testing results. Student 1 scored better in the Torch than the teacher devised questioning test. This may have been due to the fact that this student does not like to answer in detail, so the briefer 'answers' for Torch may have suited him better and he was more likely to complete the sections of Torch as they suited his work style. Seemingly the explicit teaching sessions were of great benefit to student 1 who also interacts more consistently in small group situations than whole class and was likely to be more engaged with the lessons overall than if they had been delivered whole class.

Student 2 scored better in both the teacher devised questioning test and the Torch test when comparing pre and post test data. Initially she was not a confident participant and needed to be coaxed to interact in discussions. She has received assistance regularly in current and previous years and seemed to be reluctant to contribute in a group or class situation. Towards the end of the teaching lessons she began to participate more freely and her responses were relevant. She rated her confidence level at being able to read and understand text highly both at the beginning and after the lessons. When judging gains in results it would appear that this student has benefited from these teaching lessons in both her ability to read and understand text as well as a consolidation of herself as a successful learner.

Students 3 and 4 enjoyed participating in lessons and seemed oblivious that their responses were not what was expected. They showed improvement in both tests and their confidence levels improved. Both of these students replied with 'uh' when someone gave a response that they themselves had not thought of, yet were willing to listen and clarify why that response was given and how it was relevant. Towards the end of the teaching lessons students 3 and 4 responses became more relevant and it could be observed that they were 'getting it'.

Student 5 improved in both testing formats however he needed to be kept on task to participate. Even in a small group situation he would wander and not be engaged in the lesson. However his scores show an improvement in his comprehension ability and his confidence level in his ability to read and understand text rose considerably.

Students 6 and 7 both were reluctant participants initially and had to be encouraged to interact in lessons. However over the course of the lessons, with continual positive

reinforcement for participation and valid responses, both boys willingly interacted in lessons. Both boys' scores showed improvements in comprehension and an increase in their confidence level at being able to read and understand text. It appears both boys enjoyed the small group situation where they could show off their knowledge.

Student 8 willingly participated in lessons and verbalised extensively her responses. Her confidence levels rose considerably and she now sees herself as a capable learner. Her results indicate she has made significant gains in comprehension.

DISCUSSION

In reflecting on the results of this study there is support for the hypothesis and the research, which suggests that explicitly teaching reading strategies improves student's comprehension. Whilst it should be remembered that this was a one off study notable improvements have been evident. Gains made by the target groups students overshadowed the gains of the control group and surpassed expectations. As well as improvements in the student's questioning comprehension ability there were changes to the vocabulary which they were using in formulating related questions. Although acknowledging that factual text questions tend to begin with 'what', the students made efforts to expand their use of question starter words. When comparing the frequency of question starter words in the pre-test to those in the post test there is some evidence that the students used a altered range of question starter words, or more suitable question starter words,(Table 1).

Student	Who		What		When		Where		Why		How		Other		Categories	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	4
2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	2	3	3	0	0	3	3
3	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	4	0	3	2
4	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	2	3
5	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	1	0	3	2
6	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	1	1	3	3
7	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	2	0	3	2
8	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	2	5

Table 1: Frequency of question starter words.

Whilst only anecdotal evidence is available generally the student's vocab and their efforts at verbalising improved over the teaching lessons. Students were deliberately making an attempt to answer questions fully, that is, to use words from the questions to start the answer. Below are their own reflections from one of the explicit teaching lessons.

S.1.-I increased my ability to use question words and names in questions.

S.2.-I have practised how to make interesting questions and learnt how to use questions in sentences and that helps me think.

S.3.-I learnt how to start a new sentence with different words.....make interesting sentences and change sentences to better ones.

S.4.-I have to practice to add more words to questions to make it longer.

S.5.- I learnt to read a sentence and find a good question for it.

S.6.- I learnt that I am getting better at making up questions for a text.

S.7.-I learnt how to make better questions for complete answers.

S.8.-I practised using all question starters, not just one....and to make questions longer and more detailed not short, boring ordinary words.

The student's reflections hint that they perceived themselves as better readers. Van Gorder's own study results mirror the same findings, 'They said that questioning had helped them understand new vocabulary, understand the meaning of a poem,not get stuck, move forward,.....not get bored', (2003), (pages 2&3). By the deliberate use of teacher modelling of the 'RAT' strategy the students were exposed to how self talk, as part of questioning, assists in the comprehension of text. Once the students were aware that self talk was 'acceptable' and necessary in order to understand and that this is what good readers do constantly they were keen to adopt this strategy. Harvey (2001) states 'When good readers read, they carry on an inner conversation with the text. They ask questions. This inner conversation leads to thoughtful, engaged reading-reading that enhances students understanding, builds their knowledge, and develops their insights' (page 1). Since the students had taken on a modelled strategy, and had grown in their awareness of how to understand text their confidence levels increased.

Whilst fundamentally seeking a rise in student's comprehension ability it was hoped that the student's impressions of themselves as readers would also improve. This was the case as indicated in the increase in self efficacy levels by every student, most rose significantly (Figure 5).

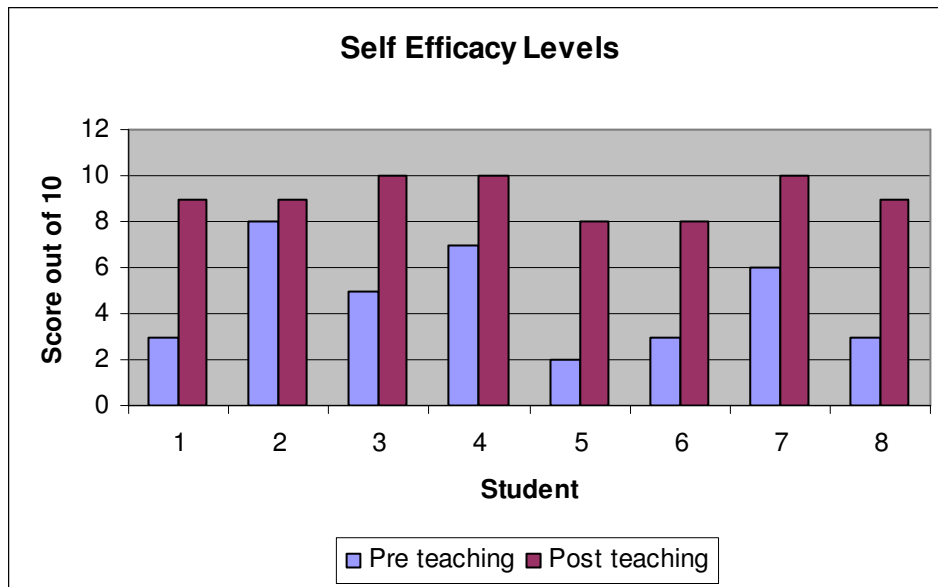


Figure 5: Students self efficacy

It would appear that the explicit teaching of questioning strategies is a worthwhile practice by classroom teachers and specialist literacy teachers. A follow on from this would be that teachers conscientiously address questioning in oral language development as well as in written form, and to expect students to use words from the question to begin the answer in order to have a detailed relevant answer. Teaching students to answer well in the written form needs to be incorporated into regular reading teaching practice. A suggestion would be that questioning be taught and developed in the early stages of reading, predominantly in oral form and then introduced in written form, and that both these forms are used continuously to further develop comprehension.

Even though the results of this study were favourable in the short term, in order for students to internalize the stratagem, maintaining and reviewing the 'RAT' strategy would be considered essential. Also by expecting students to verbalise as part of the reflection at the end of the lesson it is hoped that they will then internalise their own learning which in turn gives them more chance of the learning becoming second nature, an automatic practice. As questioning is only one of several comprehension strategies students would appear to benefit from the explicit teaching of paraphrasing, visualizing and vocabulary development.

The remaining class members were aware of the explicit teaching lessons the target group students were receiving. During whole class Literacy share time, designed as another means of positive classroom reinforcement and learning internalisation, class members became aware of the purpose of the explicit teaching lessons and the fact that the target group students were reading and verbalising the specific links in the text. The class then created their own slogan 'think and link' which they constantly repeated in the weeks following whenever the opportunity arose, i.e. group novel reading discussions, shared reading sessions. This highlights the need for students to engage with the learning, make a connection to it and relate to their circumstances. By referring to the 'think and link' slogan the students were recalling a specific strategy and making efforts to put this into practise.

The students were asked to rate their confidence in reading and understanding text out of ten. Both scores were solicited after the explicit teaching lessons. The 'pre-

teaching' confidence score was not asked for at the commencement of the teaching lessons as it was felt that the students would devise a negative picture of themselves as learners since they had already been withdrawn from normal classroom reading activities. The rise in students self efficacy through explicit positive feedback from the teacher as well as their impressions of the improvements in their own ability to read and understand text gives support to the perception that positive reinforcement drives students to strive harder. (Figures 5 & 6)

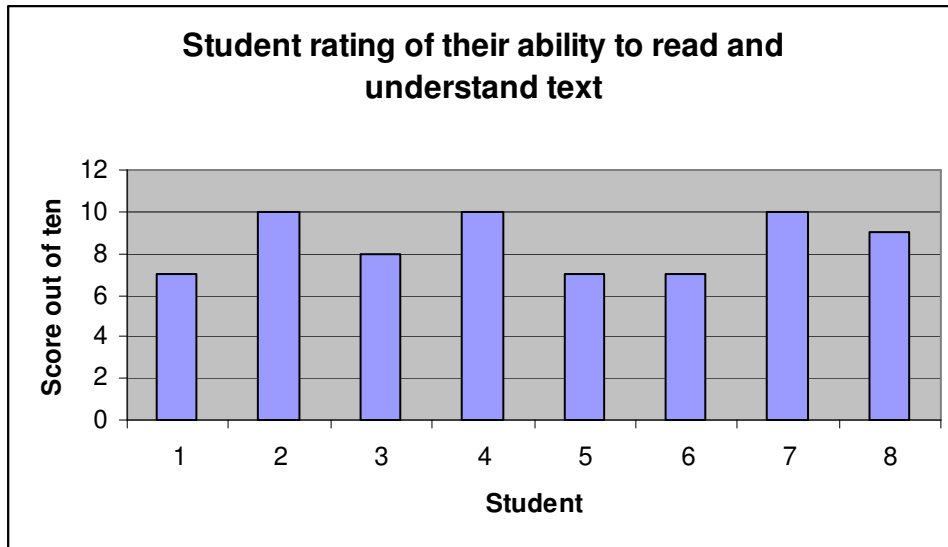


Figure 6: Students rating of their current ability to read and understand text.

The results of this study suggest that teaching the reading comprehension strategy of questioning using the 'RAT' technique is profitable with factual text. Future studies could investigate the teaching of questioning as a comprehension strategy with fiction text. Another area of possible study would be to investigate if any grade level in particular was more suited to the explicit teaching of questioning, particularly in the written format.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Lessons & resources

Appendix 2 Teacher devised Questioning test

Appendix 1 Lessons and necessary stimulus activities

Introductory lesson

30 minutes

Questioning:

- Remind students of words that start questions
- Show posters cues-who, what, when, where why, how,-display
- Talk about how to answer questions in written form-student should know this...use words from question to start answer
- Talk about how to do this well orally---we sometimes don't we just complete answer rather than giving full answer orally
- **Visual for daily stimulus on blackboard-words & answer starting hints**

First impressions/predicting:

- Remind students of how to do this well....
(Look @ –title, diagrams, context (part of series))
- By predicting we can create a feel for the text ...subject, fact/fiction, if of interest to us etc.
- **Visual for daily stimulus on blackboard-reminders of how to create a first impression of a text**

Vocab:

- Discuss with students what to do if come across unknown words in text-read on, re-read, predict via context clues
- **Visual for daily stimulus on blackboard-hints of what to do if stuck on a word**

Questioning strategy work 'books'

Using last 6 pages of English book & cover-

- page 1 heading 'Questioning Strategy practice work':
- page 2 into 4 sections-lessons 1-4:
- page 3 into 4 lessons 5-8:
- page 4 into 4 lessons 9-10:
- page 5 is Reflection page:
- page 6: RAT graphic-student paste in & label sections

- back cover has question worksheet-for tallying-students to paste this in & label various sections

RAT

- **Teacher introduce RAT cue:**

Read

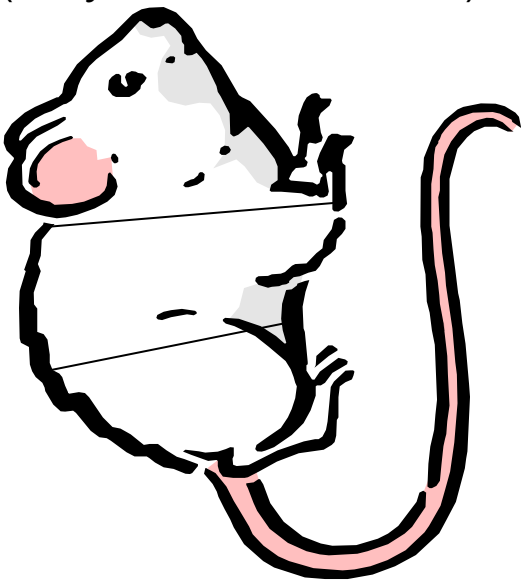
(Read title, text, maps, , pictures, captions)

Ask

(Ask to self questions –who, what, when, where, why, how)

Think/talk

(To yourself, to others)



- Students label their 'RAT' with labels and descriptors
- **Visual for daily stimulus on blackboard**
- Teacher models **RAT** reading via a text.....

Question mark cue:

- Students label space beside each sector-who, what, when, where, why and how.
- Teacher explains that each time make up a certain question tally off in that sector
- Used to encourage variety of questions

Questions

**Answering
questions well in
written and
spoken form.**

**Use as many
words from the
question to begin
your answer.**

First impressions /Predicting

**First impressions
of a text tell us a
lot.**

Refer to the title
and diagrams. This
gives us a feel for
the text & possible
content

Vocab

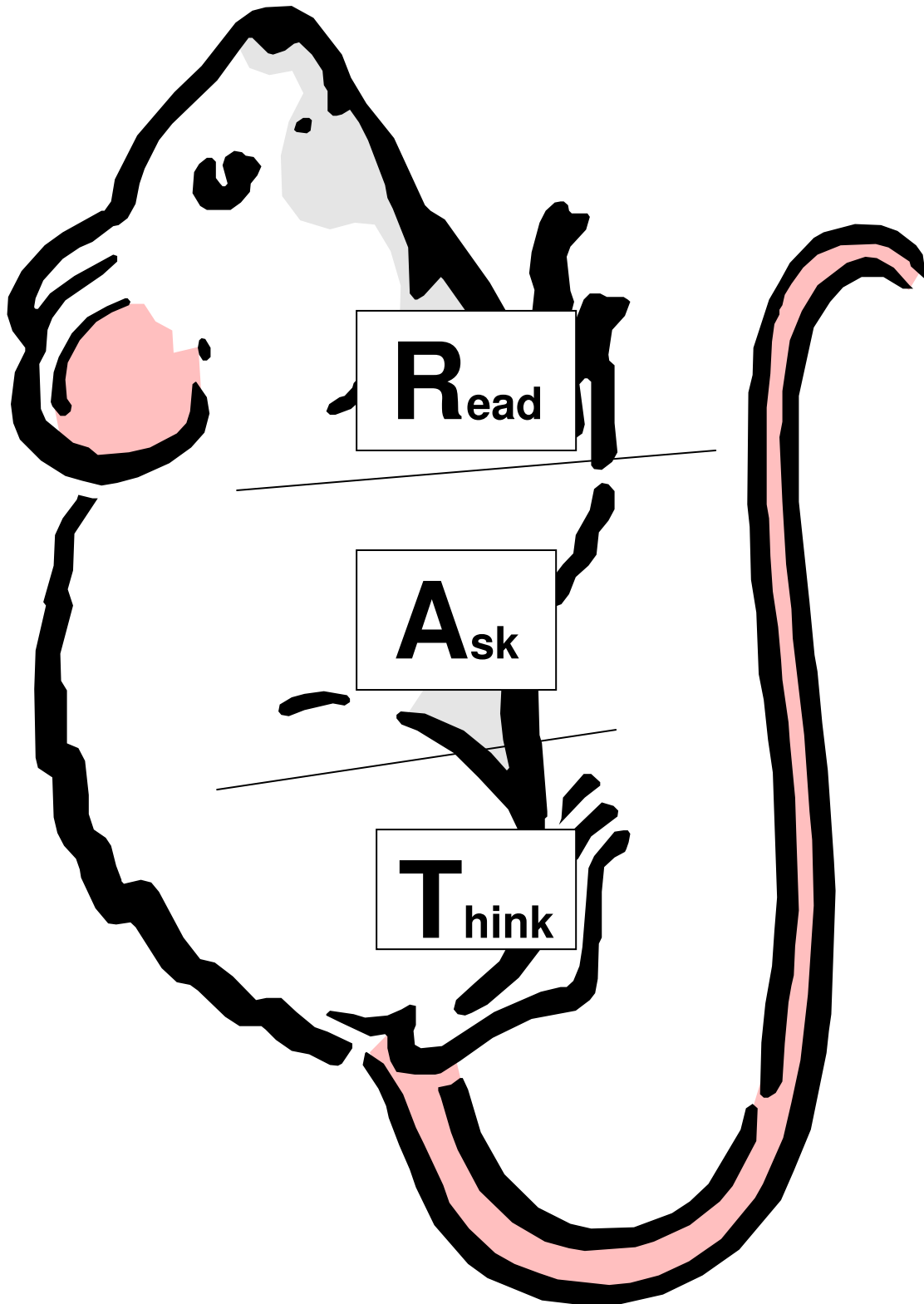
Unknown words

Read on, re-read,
predict using
content clues



Question Tally Sheet

RAT Reading Prompt



HOW

Wno

Women

What

Wnere

www

Wmich

Lesson 1: *Text: General statements*

20 minutes

- Review Questioning strategies-words & hints poster
First impressions/ predictions poster
RAT readers do.....
From Introductory session
- Teacher reads a statement aloud & asks students 'What questions would you have asked if I had said this?' (On Overhead)
- Tell me a Who question, How question, that this text definitely answers Etc
- Teacher models reading a statement aloud & verbalising questions & thought process
'has words...so must be about....' Etc
Repeat several times using different examples
- Debrief: 'What did I do before, during and after reading each statement'
'What actions did I use?'
'What was my thought process?'
'Was I a 'RAT' reader?'

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Share time: Students verbalise to the group their learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & 'sharings':

Ask students what they did & how this helped them

Statements for Lesson 1: On Overhead

A soccer ball is round and usually made of leather.

(What shape is a soccer ball?)

(What is it usually made of?)

It can be kicked, or played with the head, the legs, or the chest.

(How is a soccer ball used?)

(What parts of the body touch the soccer ball?)

The goalkeepers are the only players who are permitted to touch the ball with their hands.

(What players are allowed to touch the ball with their hands?)

Adult beavers can be over a metre long.

(How long do adult beavers grow?)

Beavers have enormous front teeth for gnawing tree trunks.

(What do beavers use their teeth for?)

(Are beaver's teeth large?)

Beavers teeth are strong and sharp, and keep growing throughout their lives.

(Do beavers teeth stop growing?)

(Are beavers teeth sharp and strong?)

Beavers live in dams and waterways.

(Where do beavers live?)

- Review Questioning strategies-words & hints poster
First impressions/ predictions poster
RAT readers do.....
From Introductory session
- Teacher models reading a statement aloud & verbalising questions & thought process
'has words...so must be about....' Etc
Repeat several times using different examples (overhead copy)
- Debrief and discuss process ensuring to interact with all with students:
'What did I do before, during and after reading each statement?'
'What actions did I use?'
'What was my thought process?'
'Was I a 'RAT' reader?'
- Students read sentences aloud in unison and take turns to make up questions- orally that the text explicitly answers. (pages 6 7,8,9)
Repeat until all students had chance to do at least one lot of questions
- Students read sentences aloud in unison and each makes up their own questions-orally that the text explicitly answers. (pages 12 & 13)
- Then as a group decide on best question for each sentence , eliciting reasons why
from students

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Tallying question starters: Students complete on their own sheet question starters they used during the session

Share time: verbalise to group or class learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & sharings: ***Ask students what they did & how this helped them***

Statements for Lesson 2: On Overhead

When Cyclone Tracey struck at about 1a.m., the winds were blowing from the north-east.

(What time did Cyclone Tracey occur?)

(What direction were the winds blowing from at about 1pm?)

Many people tried to find shelter in bathrooms and basements, under beds, or inside cupboards.

(Where did people try to find shelter?)

(Why do you think they tried to find shelter under beds etc?)

Warning sirens had been blaring every 15 minutes since noon on Tuesday.

(How frequently were the warning sirens?)

(Since noon on Tuesday what had been happening?)

The hospital has no roof, and the airport buildings have been destroyed.

(Describe some of the damage done by Cyclone Tracey)

Lessons 3: *Text ‘The Planets’*

30 minutes

(Hard copy of Text for each student)

- Review Questioning strategies-words & hints poster
First impressions/ predictions poster
RAT readers do.....
from Introductory session
- Teacher models reading a statement aloud & verbalising questions & thought process
‘ has words...so must be about....’ Etc
Repeat several times using different examples (pages 22, 23)
- Students observe teacher reading aloud and write their own questions that the text answers.
- Students read sentences aloud individually and take turns to make up questions
Repeat until all students had chance to do at least one lot of questions(pages 24,25)
- Students read sentences aloud & make up own questions and record, write it.(pages 26,27)
- Then as a group decide on best question for each sentence , eliciting reasons why
from students

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Tallying question starters: Students complete on their own sheet question starters they used during the session

Share time: verbalise to group or class learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & sharings: ***Ask students what they did & how this helped them***

(Hard copy of Text for each student)

- Review previous lesson, students recall what questions they made for specific sentences(refer to their question tally sheet).
- Teacher dialogue: 'Why did you make those questions?'
(hopefully students can say to help understand the text, if we can make questions we can make links in the text, etc)
- Review Questioning strategies-words & hints poster
First impressions/ predictions poster
RAT readers do.....
from Introductory session
- Teacher models reading a statement silently & verbalising questions & thought process
' has words...so must be about....' Etc
Repeat several times using different examples,(paragraph 1).
- Students read sentences silently individually and take turns to make up questions-share orally with group.
Repeat until all students had chance to do at least one lot of questions(paragraph 2,3)
- Students read sentences silently & make up own questions and record, write it.(paragraph 4,5)
- Students share their question(teacher writes on butcher paper for display)Then as a group decide on best question for each sentence , eliciting reasons why
from students.

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Tallying question starters: Students complete on their own sheet question starters they used during the session

Share time: verbalise to group or class learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & sharings: ***Ask students what they did & how this helped them***

Statements for Lesson 4: On Overhead

People have been cutting down trees for thousands of years.

1. what have people been doing for thousands of years?
2. who has been cutting down trees?
3. what have the people been doing to the trees?

Wood can be used to make tables and chairs and other furniture.

1. what can wood be used for?
2. Name the uses of wood?
3. why do you think wood is used for furniture making?

Trees wide branches help stop the rain from washing the topsoil away.

1. why are trees branches so wide?
2. what 'job' do the wide branches do?
3. what damage can the rain cause to the soil?

People are now growing forest trees to replace the ones that have been cut down.

1. why are people growing forest trees?
2. why have forest trees been cut down?

Lesson 5:

Text: ANZAC

40 minutes

(Hard copy of Text for each student)

- Review previous lesson, students recall what questions they made for specific sentences(refer to their question tally sheet).
- Teacher dialogue: 'Why did you make those questions?'
(hopefully students can say to help understand the text, if we can make questions we can make links in the text, etc)
- Review Questioning strategies-words & hints poster
First impressions/ predictions poster
RAT readers do..... from Introductory session
- Teacher models reading a statement silently & verbalising questions & thought process
' has words...so must be about....' Etc
Repeat several times using different statements(overhead)
- Students read sentences silently individually and take turns to make up questions and links-share orally with group.
Repeat until all students had chance to do at least one lot of questions
- Students read sentences silently & make up own questions and record, write it.(paragraph 4,5)
- Students share their question(teacher writes on butcher paper for display)Then as a group decide on best question for each sentence , eliciting reasons why
from students.
- Individual activity : Students match questions with specific statements
- Students take turns to read matched statements and questions , other students think of links and verbalise these

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Tallying question starters: Students complete on their own sheet question starters they used during the session

Share time: verbalise to group or class learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & sharings: ***Ask students what they did & how this helped them***

Statements/question matching activity

'ANZAC' Lesson 5

Match each question to two statements

1. What does ANZAC stand for?
2. Where did the troops land in 1915?
3. Who do we remember on ANZAC Day?
4. Why is the campaign (fighting) at Gallipoli significant?
5. When is Anzac day commemorated (celebrated) each year?
6. How is Anzac Day remembered now, 92 years after the event?
7. What happens during the ceremonies on Anzac Day?
8. Why do you think the Government provides aid (money and assistance) to those who fought in wars and their families?
9. Why did John Simpson Kirkpatrick become famous during the Gallipoli campaign?
10. What was Simpson's job during the war?

- a) ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.
- b) The countries included in ANZAC are Australia and New Zealand.
- c) Australian and New Zealand troops landed on the beaches at Gallipoli.
- d) Gallipoli is a town in Turkey which is a country in Europe.
- e) On Anzac Day we remember the bravery of all people killed in wars and give thanks for peace.
- f) We remember especially the Australian and New Zealand military personnel.
- g) The campaign fought at Gallipoli in 1915 is remembered especially because it was the first fighting by Australian and New Zealand soldiers in an international war.
- h) The campaign also earned the Anzacs a great reputation for bravery.
- i) Every year on the 25th of April, Australians commemorate Anzac Day.
- j) Anzac Day marks the anniversary of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli on the 25th April in 1915.
- k) This special day is a public holiday. Schools and work places close as an act of remembrance and respect.

- l) Memorial services are held throughout Australia at War Memorials. Ex- servicemen and families and the general public attend.
- m) Some ex-servicemen march in parades on this day.
- n) People and officials lay down wreaths and speeches are made.
- o) Many families no longer have a father to help provide money to run the home because he died in the war.
- p) Some ex-servicemen suffer from ill health because of war injuries and because they got the injury fighting for Australia the government pays their medical bills
- q) Simpson became famous as a stretcher bearer with a donkey.
- r) The hills and cliffs Simpson had to travel up and down were steep and dangerous. Often he and his donkey walked through heavy gunfire as the enemy fired all around him.
- s) Simpson's job was to pick up wounded soldiers and bring them to safety.
- t) Simpson used two donkeys to carry wounded men from the fighting to the beach at Anzac Cove. The wounded men received medical treatment on the beach or were taken to ships anchored off the coast.

(Hard copy of Text for each student)

- Review previous lesson, students recall what questions they made for specific sentences(refer to their question tally sheet).
- Teacher dialogue: 'Why did you make those questions?'
(hopefully students can say to help understand the text, if we can make questions we can make links in the text, etc)
- Teacher models reading a paragraph aloud & verbalising questions & thought process
' has words...so must be about....' Etc
Repeat several times using different paragraphs (pages 5,6, 7)
- Teacher asks students 'What questions might the next paragraph answer?'
Students write their suggestions.
- Teacher asks students what they will do in their mind before, whilst and after reading text,(read it, ask questions, make links so content makes sense).
Students write this down, to revisit at end of lesson.
- In pairs students read a paragraph aloud sentence by sentence. Students take turns to make up questions.
Repeat until all students have done at least one lot of questions(pg8,9,10)
- Students share their question(teacher writes on butcher paper for display)Then as a group decide on best question for each sentence , eliciting reasons why
from students.
- Students discuss the notion of reading on in order to gain information to answer questions, as well as making links with ideas in text.

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Tallying question starters: Students complete on their own sheet question starters they used during the session

Share time: verbalise to group or class learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & sharings: ***Ask students what they did & how this helped them***

(Hard copy of Text for each student)

- Review previous lesson, students recall what questions they made for specific sentences(refer to their question tally sheet).
- Students write reflective statements about the variety of question starters they have been using in previous lessons and set 'goal' for today's lesson. Goal can be about using specific question starter, or 'RAT' reading strategy.
- Teacher models reading a paragraph aloud & verbalising questions
Repeat several times using different paragraphs (pages 2,3,4)
- Teacher asks students what they will do in their mind before, whilst and after reading text,(read it, ask questions, make links so content makes sense).
Students encouraged to verbalise their response "As I read the text I will....."
- Students read a paragraph aloud. Other students take turns to make up questions and state links in text.
Repeat until all students had chance to do at least one lot of questions/links(pages 5,6,7)
- Discuss the possibility of 'unanswered' questions and the need to read on at times to gather all information/answers. (Encouraging students to see reading in bigger scale rather than paragraph by paragraph).
- Specific reflection: students refer to their 'goal' of the lesson noting whether they fulfilled it, attempted it.
- Students discuss the notion of reading on in order to gain information to answer questions, as well as making links with ideas in text.

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Tallying question starters: Students complete on their own sheet question starters they used during the session

Share time: verbalise to group or class learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & sharings: ***Ask students what they did & how this helped them***

Lesson 8:
minutes

Text Asian Elephants

30

(Hard copy of Text for each student)

- Review previous lesson, students recall what questions they made for specific paragraphs(refer to their question tally sheet).
- Students create a 'flow chart' of their understanding of the reading process for both reading and understanding the text.
- Teacher models reading a paragraph silently & verbalising questions
Repeat several times using different paragraphs (pages 1,2,3,)
- Teacher asks students what they will do in their mind before, whilst and after reading text,(read it, ask questions, make links so content makes sense).
Students encouraged to verbalise their response "As I read the text I will....."
- Students read a paragraph silently and write links regarding content as well as answerable and unanswerable questions. (pages 6,7,8)
- Students share their links and answerable questions(to build confidence in knowing others have similar)
- Students read on from their previous paragraph in an attempt to answer 'unanswerable' questions.
- Group discussion 'What does knowing how to question during reading help me to do ?' (understand the text better, make links about the content)

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Tallying question starters: Students complete on their own sheet question starters they used during the session

Share time: verbalise to group or class learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & sharings: ***Ask students what they did & how this helped them***

Lesson 9:

Text Antarctica

30 minutes

(Hard copy of Text for each student)

- Review previous lesson, students recall what questions they made for specific paragraphs(refer to their question tally sheet).
- Revisit, discuss process of reading(make links, answer questions, gain knowledge)
- Teacher models reading a paragraph silently & verbalising questions
Repeat several times using different paragraphs (paragraphs 1,2,3,)
- Students read a paragraph silently and write links regarding content as well as answerable and unanswerable questions. (paragraphs 6,7,8)
- Students share their links and answerable questions(to build confidence in knowing others have similar)
- Students read on from their previous paragraph in an attempt to answer 'unanswerable' questions.
- Students write knowledge facts that they have gained from today's reading
- Group discussion 'What does knowing how to question during reading help me to do ?' (understand the text better, make links about the content, gain knowledge)

Lesson Reflection:

At end of the lesson make time for:

Personal reflection: students complete in books ...what they learnt, practised in lesson, what self scripts they are developing....

Tallying question starters: Students complete on their own sheet question starters they used during the session

Share time: verbalise to group or class learnings, achievements, queries etc..., discuss vocab –make synonym chart for constant referral, update each lesson

Recording responses: Teacher to make point of interacting with each student & make specific notes re their reflection & sharings: ***Ask students what they did & how this helped them***

Lesson 10:
minutes

Text Animal Weapons

30

(Hard copy of Text for each student)

- Review previous lesson, students recall what questions they made for specific paragraphs(refer to their bookwork).
- Revisit, discuss process of reading(make links, answer questions, gain knowledge)
- Teacher models reading a paragraph silently & verbalising questions, links and facts
Repeat several times using different paragraphs (pages ,2,3,4)
- Students read a paragraph/page silently and write related questions, links and facts. (paragraphs 6,7,8)
- Students read their section to group, pose their questions and allow other students to answer their questions.
- Students read on from their previous paragraph in an attempt to answer 'unanswerable' questions.
- Students write knowledge facts that they have gained from today's reading

Lesson Reflection:

:

- Discuss what type of words are usually question starters for factual texts...students tally up their question starters page-majority of would be 'What' questions. And how this could differ from fiction texts.
- Students score themselves out of ten for: their ability to read and understand texts now; their current confidence level in being able to do this; their confidence level prior to having intensive explicit teaching
- Group discussion , praise for gains in confidence and skill development in being able to understand a read text.

Post tests activities

40 minutes approx.

Using both target group students (explicit teaching group) and control group students complete both testing activities.

- TORCH Reading Comprehension test(same as pre- test)
- Teacher devised questioning activity(same as pre-test)

Appendix 2

Name:

Date:

Questioning Test

Questions often begin with words such as **Who, What, When, Where, How** or **Why**.

Read the following texts and make up a suitable question about each.

Beavers are excellent swimmers. They have webbed hind feet, waterproof fur, and flat hairless tails. They can close their nostrils and stay under water for up to 15 minutes.

The city of Darwin was devastated early on Wednesday, 25th December, by Cyclone Tracy. At least 40 people are known to be dead, and hundreds are badly injured. Ninety-five percent of the city's buildings have been damaged by winds that reached speeds of 200 kilometres an hour.

Soccer is the most popular football game in the world today. It is played by two teams, each consisting of eleven players. A game of soccer lasts for ninety minutes. There is a five-minute break at half-time, when the teams change ends.

Mount Saint Helens erupted at 8.39 a.m. this morning. First came two earthquakes. Then the top of the 9,577 foot volcano exploded. The whole of the north side blew away, leaving a crater two miles long and one mile wide. The great roar was heard 200 miles away. Smoke and burning ash billowed out at great speed. It smothered the north side of the mountain, and then more ash shot 60, 000 feet (ten miles) into the sky.

Giraffes live in Africa. They are the tallest animals in the world. A new baby giraffe stands as tall as a man. A fully grown giraffe is three times taller. Some giraffes have big brown patches on their pale cream skin. Other giraffes are brown all over, marked with paler lines that look like nets.

Watching a snake gliding smoothly and silently along the ground is one of nature's marvels. Three parts of the snake's body help it move along-the backbone, the ribs, and the large horny scales underneath. It is by muscles moving these parts in certain ways that the snake glides along the ground. The body always moves from side to side in a wriggling or writhing manner; never up and down. It is the very flexible backbone that allows this writhing movement.
