Explicit teaching of a visualisation strategy to eight year three and four students over ten lessons will impact on their comprehension of both fiction and non-fiction texts.

Teaching sessions – Teaching a visualizing strategy to a small group of Year 3 and 4 students to improve comprehension skills.

VISUALISING

Session 1

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

Introduce the strategy: I am going to show you some familiar objects. I want you to look at them carefully and after a minute or two I will remove the object. Then, I want you to close your eyes and see the object in your mind. This is called visualizing. Next I want you to describe the picture you saw in your mind.

Activity #1 – Color and Geometric shapes.
1. Present geometric shapes of different colors, one at a time to students.
2. Ask them to look at it carefully.
3. Remove the shape and ask students to see the shape in their minds by closing their eyes, staring at a blank wall or by rolling their eyes up toward the ceiling. (Let students experiment to see which works best for them).
4. Teacher models for students how to do this.
   Example: in my mind I can see a red shape. It is bigger than my hand and it has six sides. It's thin and it’s made of hard plastic.
5. If a student says he can't see the shape, let him/her draw what they remember. (To draw the shape they must use visual memory).
6. Students describe to the group what they see in their minds eye.
7. Repeat activity another 1 or 2 times as necessary.
8. Explain to the students that good readers see (visualize) pictures as they read. This ability to see pictures or movies in your mind as you read, leads to good understanding of what you read. It also helps you to remember what you have read. Let us all say together:

   GOOD READERS SEE PICTURES IN THEIR MIND AS THEY READ.
   (Have students repeat after you).
Activity #2 - Concrete objects.

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

1. Present students with an interesting object, eg. a soft toy.
2. Ask students to use their senses to look at it and touch it. (If appropriate other senses can be used as well, eg. smell, hearing, taste).
3. After a minute or two, remove the object and ask students to close their eyes and make a picture of the object in their mind. If they want to they can draw the object. Teacher models for students how to do this.
Example: the toy is a small, furry brown kangaroo. It has a red ribbon around its neck. The kangaroo is a mother because she has a joey in her pouch. The toy is very soft and it has black, shiny button eyes.
4. If necessary, they can be prompted by asking “What can you see now?”
5. Ask students to describe their visualizations with the group.
6. Repeat activity another 1 or 2 times as necessary.
7. Again, explain to the students that good readers see (visualise) pictures as they read. This ability to see pictures or movies in your mind as you read, leads to good understanding of what you read. It also helps you to remember what you have read. Let us all say together:

GOOD READERS SEE PICTURES IN THEIR MIND AS THEY READ.
(Have students repeat after you).

Activity #3 - Distant Concrete objects

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

1. This time, ask students to recall something they have in their classroom and close their eyes and make a picture of it in their mind. If they wish to draw it, allow them to do so.
2. Teacher models for students how to do this.
Example: *in my classroom I can see a big red table in the middle of the room. There are 6 red chairs around the table and 3 or 4 piles of books on top of the table; I can also see my diary on one corner of the table.*

3. Ask the students to share what they see with the group.

4. Repeat activity as necessary by recalling and making pictures in their mind of things from their home. Eg. objects in the kitchen, their bedroom, a special toy, the family car.

5. At the end of each visualisation, have students share what they see with the group.

6. Again, explain to the students that *good readers see (visualise) pictures as they read.* This ability to see pictures or movies in your mind as you read, leads to good understanding of what you read. It also helps you to remember what you have read. Let us all say together:

   **GOOD READERS SEE PICTURES IN THEIR MIND AS THEY READ.**
   *(Have students repeat after you).*

**Session 2**

**LISTENING TO A NARRATIVE TEXT**

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

Begin this session by reminding students what we learned in the previous session. That *good readers see (visualise) pictures as they read.* This ability to see pictures or movies in your mind as you read, leads to good understanding of what you read. It also helps you to remember what you have read. Let us all say together:

   **GOOD READERS SEE PICTURES IN THEIR MIND AS THEY READ.**
   *(Have students repeat after you).*

Today we are going to visualize things we read. *This is what you do.* After I have read each sentence, you make a picture of it in your mind and say what the picture is.
Listen to these sentences. Put a picture in your head then tell us about the picture. (Students can elect to draw pictures if they wish).

I will read the sentence then I will try to visualise it. Then I want you to try.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Simple) sentences read out loud</th>
<th>Teacher visualisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The cat ate the fish.</td>
<td>In my mind I see a black cat holding a goldy colored fish in his paws. He holds the fish tight as he bends his head down to eat the fish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cricket ball smashed the glass door.</td>
<td>In my mind I can see a group of boys in the playground playing cricket. One of the boys is bowling the ball, the boy who is batting whacks the ball with the bat and it smashes into the classroom window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school principal read a story to the preps.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The doctor gave the sick boy an injection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cleaner mopped the floor,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rich man sold his big house for lots of money.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane and Mary shared 12 lollies equally between themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hungry dog ate a big juicy bone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher reviews the action:** Let us look at what we did. I read each sentence and then made a picture of it. See how it helped you to understand what the text said. Do you have any questions?

Repeat this for the rest of the text, sentence by sentence. The teacher models the visualizing first then lets students take turns. Remind them regularly of what they are doing. *What do you tell yourself to do when you visualize?*

Continue to work through the texts as many as required. Allow students to make comments about each others visualising, correcting if necessary.
The bottle of coke fell on the carpet and stained it. In my mind I can see a little boy getting a big bottle of coke out of the fridge. It's too heavy for him and as he tries to pour himself a glass, the bottle slips out of his hands and it falls to the floor and spills on the carpet and a big black stain appears on the carpet.

A fast car, traveling on the highway, easily passed the school bus. I n my mind I can see a red sports car being driven at high speed along a crowded freeway. There's a school bus full of children traveling in the outside lane. The driver of the car accelerates and easily passes the overcrowded bus.

The vet asked his nurse to hold the puppy while he gave him an injection.

The sleeping horses suddenly woke up when they heard a loud bang coming from the other end of the stable.

The thief robbed the bank and as he escaped he shot the bank manager.

My aunt and uncle want to build a big house in the country but they don't have enough money to start building yet.

Sam has a big bit of paper, a brush and three pots filled with red, blue and yellow. She smiles as she picks up the brush to start painting.

I am sitting on a seat. My feet are on the pedals. I am puffing but it's great as I go across the line. It's my first championship.

After the students have visualized the texts (as many as felt necessary), let's discuss what steps you used to visualize. Several students say the process they used to arrive at a mental picture.
Tell me what you know about visualizing and what steps you should follow to visualize a text.

Have students say what they do when they visualize as follows:

1. The first step in visualizing is to read a sentence.
2. The second step is to make a picture of what it says.
3. The third step is to say the picture you have made.

Session 3

READING OUT LOUD NARRATIVE TEXT

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

During this session students again apply the visualizing strategy sentence by sentence. The students review the steps involved in producing visualising and the teacher gives additional practice in visualizing single sentences first interactively as a group and then with a partner. The teacher actively monitors the students’ visualizing, giving appropriate feedback both individually and through group discussion. Pupils transfer the strategy to new texts by being shown a text and saying what they will do.

Teacher reviews what students remember about visualizing from sessions 1 and 2.

- What do you do when you visualize a sentence?
- How does visualizing help you?

Let’s say together the three steps about what to do when we visualise:

1. The first step in visualizing is to read a sentence.
2. The second step is to make a picture of what it says.
3. The third step is to say the picture you have made.
Repeat set of teaching procedures as in Sessions 1 and 2. Regularly remind students of the nature of the task and have them review the action. Students can elect to draw pictures if they want.

Passages to read and visualize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dan sits by the fire with Midnight on his lap. He strokes the silky fur softly as his head nods to his chest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mum goes into the shop and is quickly served. She buys a loaf of bread, five fresh rolls and a bun then hurries to her car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the table I have a card. There is an envelope in my right hand I am holding a pen too. I start to write on the envelope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are looking at the beautiful Monarch butterflies. One sits on my hand. 'Be careful to shake it off gently before you go out,' says the teacher. 'Goodbye your Highness,' says George.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bus slowly roared up the hill. 'You would think there were fifty people on board,' said Don. 'It's the engine,' said John. 'Too old.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A girl in a wheelchair is sitting at her computer. A book is open and her hands are on the keyboard. She looks up and asks the teacher a question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rabbit came out of its hole into night as bright as day. Immediately the rabbit bent down to eat but it kept looking around between mouthfuls of grass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our cat has three kittens. Jack loves the all-black one best because it is naughty. Tara likes to cuddle the white one with the black spot on its head. But I adore the white one that's so tiny.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Session 4**

**READING OUT LOUD NARRATIVE TEXT**

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

*In the last 3 sessions we were practicing visualising sentence by sentence. Now we are going to read two sentences at a time and then visualise them.*

*Let’s revise what actions we do when we visualize. Students say what they do.*

Passages to read and visualize, printed onto card for students to read out loud.
'Come back!' called Michelle. But it didn't. It just jumped over the wooden fence, gave a bark and ran on. She couldn't catch it until they had nearly reached the road. 'Bad boy!' she said angrily. 'You could have been killed!

The man comes out of the shop to meet his wife. She has been waiting for him on the footpath. He holds a very small bag in his hand. He opens the bag to show his wife. She looks into the bag and lets out a small cry of delight. Then she puts her hand into the bag and pulls out her favourite chocolate.

Kay gets three cups. She puts a teabag in each one. She hears the kettle begin to whistle so she picks up the kettle and fills the cups. She adds milk to two cups and sugar to one. Then she puts the cups onto a tray and walks into the lounge.

'This one is breathing!' called someone. The others waded over and began to push desperately. Unexpectedly, a bigger wave rose above the sand bar and the poor creature was free. They all cheered. Its big eyes looked back at them as though he was saying thanks.

The grey mouse poked his nose out of his hole in the wall. He looked around nervously. Then suddenly, he scurried across the kitchen floor towards a pile of bread crumbs. Quickly he ate as many as he could, before scampering at great speed back into the safety of his mouse-hole.

A young boy climbed onto his brother's bike. His feet nearly reached the pedals. He sat on the seat and tried to pedal as best as he could. The bike wobbled and started to move forward slowly. The suddenly...wobble, wobble, crash!

Joan could hardly believe her eyes! All these gifts were for her! She had never seen so many packages. Which one should she unwrap first? The biggest? The smallest? Such hard decisions to make! Perhaps she could ask her sister to help her.

Mum looked sad when she met Jack from school. 'I have lost my ring,' she said. 'I have looked everywhere, but I can't find it,' 'Is that the ring Dad gave you?' Jack asked. 'Yes,' said Mum. 'He'll be worried about it.' 'I will help you look for it after tea,' said Jack. After tea, as Jack was eating his third cake, his teeth bit on something hard. He took it out of his mouth. Guess what it was! It was Mum's ring. What a surprise they both had!

'There is wind here,' said Mark happily. 'It blows the snow and brings tumbleweeds and makes the sheep run. Wind and wind and wind!' Mark stood up and ran like the wind, and the sheep ran after him. Sarah and I watched him jump up over rock and gullies, the sheep behind him, stiff legged and fast. He circled the field, the sun making the top of his hair golden. He collapsed next to Sarah, and the lambs pushed their wet noses into us.
**Session 5**

**READING OUT LOUD NARRATIVE AND NON-FICTION TEXT**

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

Teacher review what students remember about visualizing from Sessions 1, 2, 3, 4.
- *What do you do when you visualize two sentences at a time?*
- *How does visualising help you?*

Have students visualize some of the passages used in Sessions 3 and 4. Remind them to read one or two sentences at a time.

Students can read 2 or 3 passages of text as a group, repeating the set of teaching procedures in Session 1. Regularly remind students of the nature of the task and have them review the action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage 1</th>
<th>Jake and Pete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrew Perry and Ron Thomas, Literacy in the Classroom-Book 1, Oxford University Press-2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage 2</th>
<th>Coconuts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scholastic Literacy Skills, Comprehension Ages 6-8 Scholastic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage 3</th>
<th>What happened to the dinosaurs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scholastic Literacy Skills, Comprehension Ages 6-8 Scholastic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remind students of the visualization strategy and then let them work in pairs the read and visualize **Passage 5**, Mobile Phones, Scholastic Literacy Skills, Comprehension Ages 6-8 Scholastic.

Come together as a group to discuss passage 5. Monitor students’ comments and correct if necessary.

Review the visualization strategy by having students repeat it to the group.
Session 6

READING OUT LOUD NARRATIVE AND NON-FICTION TEXT

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

Remind students of the strategy: You have been learning to do something that will help you to understand and to remember what you read. We called it visualizing. What you do is this. After you have read a sentence or a couple of sentences, you make a picture of it in your mind and say what the picture is.

(Passage #1 ‘Emily and the egg’) This text is about Emily who finds a large, unusual egg in a park. She looks after it until it hatches, but it’s not a chicken that hatches out of the egg.......

Have students take turns to read aloud the first one or two sentences twice. Visualise sentences as a whole group activity. Then, in pairs, have students read each sentence, visualize it and describe their image. Then ask groups to say their image of each sentence.

Teacher reviews action: Let us look at what we did here. We read each sentence and then made a picture of it in our minds. Then we said what our image was. See how it helped you to understand what the text said. Do you have any questions?

Repeat this for the rest of the paragraphs, one at a time.

Correct students’ responses.

After the students have visualized the paragraphs, have students identify unfamiliar words and suggest synonyms or meaningful phrases for them. Record these on a whiteboard and have students say each word and its meaningful substitutes. These may include the following:

Passage#1(Emily finds an egg)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT WORD/PHRASE</th>
<th>STUDENTS SUGGEST SYNONYM OR MEANINGFUL PHRASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curl of smoke</td>
<td>The smoke is going upwards like a curl (question mark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaly</td>
<td>Body is covered in scales like a snake/fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spiky</td>
<td>Lots of small spikes or points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>popped</td>
<td>Put, placed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Passage #2 (Are you what you eat?)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT WORD/PHRASE</th>
<th>STUDENTS SUGGEST SYNONYM OR MEANINGFUL PHRASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balanced diet</td>
<td>When you eat a little bit from each food group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort</td>
<td>kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains</td>
<td>Wheat, corn, oats, barely are grains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grinding</td>
<td>crushing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Passage #3 (Getting to school)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT WORD/PHRASE</th>
<th>STUDENTS SUGGEST SYNONYM OR MEANINGFUL PHRASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>The world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollute</td>
<td>To make the world dirty, unclean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country areas</td>
<td>Places in the country, outside of the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>Small towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>journey</td>
<td>trip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Session 7**

**READING OUT LOUD NON-FICTION TEXT**

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

Use text ‘Caves’ from MacMillan Education

**In this session**, students read aloud a sentence or two, visualize as a whole group and then each student writes a description of their image for each sentence. Work through each paragraph, sentence by sentence in turn.
**Remind students of the strategy:** You have been learning to do something that will help you to understand and to remember what you read. We called it visualizing. What you do is this. After you have read a sentence or a group of sentences, you make a picture of it in your mind and say what the picture is.

*First we did this with sentences, now we can do it with several sentences, depending on how long and difficult they are.*

After reading each page, students suggest new unfamiliar words/phrases and the teacher and/or student peers teach synonyms for these. List these on the white board, teach these and the synonyms.

**Teacher reviews what students remember about visualizing:**

- What do you do when you visualise a sentence?
- How does visualizing help you?

**VISUALISING**

**Session 8**

**SILENTLY READING NON-FICTION TEXT**

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

Use text Caves, MacMillan Education.

Review the key words and synonym list assembled in Session #7. Write each of the key words on the whiteboard and ask students to suggest synonyms or matching meaningful phrases. Have students say again the links between each pair.

In this session, students read silently the first paragraph, one or two sentences at a time. When they have done this at least once, students in the whole group activity make an image of it and describe their image.
After reading this sentences, ask students to suggest new unfamiliar words and teach synonyms for these. Paraphrase the text as necessary, visualize and describe to the group. List new unfamiliar words on the whiteboard, teach these and the synonyms and add to the earlier list.

Students say what they do when they visualize a paragraph.

Teacher reviews what students remember about visualizing.

- What do you do when you visualise a sentence?
- How does visualising help you?

**Session 9**

**SILENTLY READING NON-FICTION TEXT**

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

Use text Caves, MacMillan Education.

Read silently each paragraph one or two sentences at a time. Students visualize sentence by sentence in the whole group and each student writes their visualization of each sentence.

Review key words and synonym list assemble in Sessions 7, 8. Write each of the key words on the white board and ask students to suggest synonyms or matching meaningful phrases. Have students say again the links between each pair.

**Ask students:** What do you do to visualize a paragraph?

During this session, the students read silently the first paragraph. Once they have done this at least once, students visualize the paragraph one or two sentences at a time, then individually, make an image of what it says. They describe their images and how they made them. They then continue to apply this to each of the other paragraphs.
After reading the section, ask students to suggest new unfamiliar words and teach synonyms for these. List these on the whiteboard, teach these and the synonyms and add them to the earlier list.

Teacher reviews what students remember about visualizing.

- What do you do when you visualise a sentence?
- How does visualising help you?

**Session 10**

**SILENTLY READING NON-FICTION TEXT**

Recommended teacher dialogue is shown in italics.

Use text Caves, MacMillan Education.

Review key words and synonym list assemble in Sessions #7, 8, 9. Write each of the key words on the white board and ask students to suggest synonyms or matching meaningful phrases. Have students say again the links between each pair.

**Ask students:** What do you do to visualize a paragraph?

During this session, the students read silently the first paragraph. Once they have done this at least once, students individually make an image of the paragraph, one or two sentences at a time, then describe the image to themselves and write it down. When they have finished doing this individually for the text, the students share their images for each paragraph with the group.

After reading the section, ask students to suggest new unfamiliar words and teach synonyms for these. List these on the whiteboard, teach these and the synonyms and add them to the earlier list.

Teacher reviews what students remember about visualizing.

- What do you do when you visualise a sentence?
- How does visualising help you?