



The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County
Teacher Study Group Grant Award
Summer 2009-2010
FINAL REPORT
DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

STUDY GROUP TOPIC: Thinking Strategies

List of group members: Angela Otis, Danielle Shaller, Alexis Oryhon,
Philesha Evans, and Rachel Bates

The final report must be word-processed and submitted both in print and through e-mail using this form. Contact kharasta@btbooces.org for the electronic version of this form. Include information under each of the following headings.

Describe the initial objectives of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.

The objectives for the group were as follows: Teachers will be able to:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of the comprehension strategies
2. Create meaningful connections between the methods for teaching each strategy to the students we teach on a daily basis (ex: Which are specific to our student population and which methods need adapted to fit their schema)
3. Use each strategy during our readings and collaborations to increase our own involvement and understanding of the texts
4. Observe the effectiveness of strategy instruction by teaching 2-3 of these strategies to a small group of students over the summer

We feel very confident in saying our study group met each of these four objectives. Every member of the group came away from the sessions excited about the level of learning she achieved. The confidence each group member gained through the new learning is evident in the lessons being created, the ongoing dialogues between colleges and planning for the future which is taking place. As a whole, we felt our learning about teaching comprehension strategies was greater than in graduate level courses we've taken in college. (obj. 1)

During each session, we constantly engaged in dialogue regarding our current students and wondered if the teaching ideas would fit our students needs.

Majority of the time, we agreed they would. On occasions we decided to change resources, either a text or a song, in order to make the instruction more fitting to their background and interests. (obj. 2)

Each facilitator led activities to promote engagement and introduce a thinking strategy. She did this by having us participate in the same type of activities our students will be doing. This process created a feeling of ownership and understanding as we read and discussed each concept. (obj. 3)

We did have to adjust are plans on how we worked with students. We were able to work with two students one-on-one but it was a limited setting. One of our group members felt teaching these strategies in her summer school class would be appropriate. Each week she introduced a new 'thinking' strategy and engaged in similar activities from our readings and discussions. We were able to learn a lot from her experience. She shared how her students participated and viewed each activity. These lessons helped confirm our knowledge of our students and what will appeal to them as learners. (obj. 4)

Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.

Teachers in the study group met regularly to discuss, share, reflect and exchange ideas on each strategy. One strategy was focused on at a time. Teachers read from a variety of texts on the strategy focused on that day. During discussions, teachers shared their new thinking and reflected on how they will use each idea to improve student learning. The following texts were used during the study:

- Strategies That Work, Stephanie Harvey
- Comprehension Should Not Be Silent, from Strategy Instruction to Student Independence, Michelle Kelley
- 7 Keys to Comprehension, Susan Zimmerman
- Comprehension Strategies, Roberta Mantione
- Comprehension Connections, Tanny McGregor *primary text

Comprehension Connections by Tanny McGregor helped us deepen our understanding of each strategy by seeing each idea in concrete ways, we reflected on ways to apply these new skills for our own students. We discussed our student population and reflected on how we will begin to meet their needs better.

Describe how the action plan was implemented.

The action plan was closely followed as described above. The facilitator for the meeting provided opportunities to enhance our learning. She introduced the strategy for the day by having us participate in the same type of lesson we would lead with our students.

Our group met on a regular basis, nearly two times a week for two hours each session. During the sessions we had time to try activities, read a variety of texts to enhance discussions, discuss our students in depth and find concrete ways to reach them as 4th graders. We also discussed and shared our own ideas from the reading we did on our own.

Evaluate the impact of the study group effort on teacher/student performance.
How has this study group changed you as a teacher? Do you anticipate that any of your teaching practices will have changed?

Our effort towards the study group and our own learning was very strong. We remained committed to our readings, reflections and sharing. Each meeting we were excited to develop stronger connections between our texts and each others' ideas. As teachers, this study group has taken our expectation to a new level. We have a strong commitment to teaching our students these strategies and working together as a team to do a better job for our students. The study group made us more knowledgeable and confident towards teaching reading comprehension in a way our students will now understand. We are also thankful for the resources we have at our disposal and are familiar with a variety of text resources now that we didn't use before. We are looking forward to integrating music and literature in new ways. As a team, our collaboration skills and desire to work together deepened as a result of the study group. In our school, we are required to follow a scripted reading series. However, we will make better use of small group instruction, workstation activities and especially read aloud choices to meet our new goals for teaching these strategies.

What evidence do you expect to see of student achievement improving as a result of your participating in this study group?

We expect to see an overall improvement in student comprehension. Students will become more active thinkers while reading. They will be given

more time to think and 'talk' about their thinking. This will not only lead to increased reading engagement, but a deeper understanding as well. Students will have opportunities to see lessons modeled throughout the content areas, so they will also be applying these new strategies to science and social studies. Our students will become more reflective thinkers!

What evidence is there that the objectives of the study group has/has not been met?

In the first section of the report each objective was described and also how we met them. The following are more examples of how we accomplished them as well.

We as teachers have a deeper understanding of each concept. We are able to use the terms appropriately, discuss ways to introduce and apply in appropriate, and engaging ways for our students. We feel so much more comfortable introducing each concept and weaving them into all our content areas.

We thought most of the concrete activities we learned about were appropriate for our students, however, we feel our population will need more teacher modeling and practice on each strategy because their background knowledge can be more limited.

We participated in a handful of the activities for each comprehension strategy to deepen our understandings. We also made connections when we listened to select songs; we made connections and inferences when we did a 'pass the quote' reading strategy on teaching inference.

Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?

The study group process worked very well for us. The reading and reflection time helped us process the information in a meaningful way. The time we took to discuss each concept and apply the knowledge to our own thinking and students helped us understand each concept better. This process

helped reinforce the value of 'talk time' needed as learners. We will find appropriate ways to give our own students this time to develop their own understandings. As learners, we have never delved so deeply in a text before.

How will the study group information be shared?

Sharing will take place in a variety of ways. Our study group will meet with the rest of our team during planning time and conference days. Any strategy posters or anchor charts, Smart board files created will be shared and made available. As we embed our new learning into our teaching of reading, science or social studies, we will be open with our colleagues on lessons and how it is improving student learning. We are open to sharing at our building level as well during faculty meetings. One or two of our group members will also offer a workshop during the school year as requested.

A final report is due one week after the last meeting or by August 13, 2009, whichever date is first. The report must be typed and double-spaced using the provided form. One copy must be submitted in print and the file must be submitted through e-mail to kharasta@btbooces.org. Return to **THE TEACHER CENTER of Broome County @ WSKG, BOCES #22.**