Vision for Transformational Reading Instruction

Reading is the bedrock of most or all academic actions. Reading is the complex act of constructing meaning from print. Reading serves a variety of purposes in school and in life in general. People read for three distinct purposes: to better understand themselves, others, and the world around them; to use the knowledge they gain to change the world in which they live; to compare and contrast knowledge for the purpose of academic or personal edification. In an educational setting, all teachers, regardless of content area expertise, must have the capacity to teach reading and writing. In order for all students to develop this in-depth knowledge of literacy, teachers must teach in an ambitious and culturally-responsive way.

Becoming a reader is a gradual and complex process. As children, there is no fixed point at which we suddenly become readers. Instead, all of us bring our understanding of spoken language, our knowledge of the world, and our experiences in it to make sense of what we read. We grow in our ability to comprehend and interpret a wide range of reading materials by making appropriate choices from among the extensive repertoire of skills and strategies that develop over time. These strategies include predicting, comprehension monitoring, phonemic awareness, critical thinking, decoding, using context, and making connections to what we already know.

Core practices of transformational reading instruction, include:

In order to make sure that all individuals have access to the intellectual benefits of full literacy, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) believes that our society and our schools must provide students with:

- access to a wide range of texts that mirror the range of students' abilities and interests;
- ample time to read a wide range of materials, from the very simple to the very challenging;
- teachers who help them develop an extensive repertoire of skills and strategies;
- opportunities to learn how reading, writing, speaking, and listening support each other;
- access to the literacy skills needed in a technologically advanced society;
- teachers who use a variety of discourse strategies with students to get them to think deeply and to respond to each other’s thinking;
- environments that are print rich and responsive to student needs.
Instructional Implications

- Explicit instruction of the five essential components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Recognize the role that motivation plays in students’ reading by modeling for students how to engage with complex texts that do and do not interest them.

- Engage students in performative reading responses such as gesture, mime, vocal intonation, characterization, and dramatization to enable active construction of meaning.
- Construct a collaborative environment that builds on the strengths of individual students.
- Have students read multiple texts focused on the same topic to improve comprehension through text-to-text connections.
- Foster students’ engagement with complex texts by teaching students how different textual purposes, genres, and modes require different strategies for reading.
- Encourage students to choose texts, including nonfiction, for themselves, in addition to assigned ones, to help them see themselves as capable readers who can independently use reading capabilities they learn in class.
- Demonstrate, especially at the secondary level, how digital and visual texts including multimodal and multi-genre texts require different approaches to reading.
- Connect students’ reading of complex texts with their writing about reading and with writing that uses complex texts as models so they will recognize and be able to negotiate many different types of complex texts.
- Develop students’ ability to engage in meaningful discussion of the complex texts they read in whole-class, small group, and partner conversations so they can learn to negotiate and comprehend complex texts independently.
- Read aloud age-appropriate books to students that are thematically and conceptually related. Offer opportunities to learn that children could not yet experience independently, such as modeling of appropriate fluency (accuracy, automaticity, and prosody), instructional reading strategies, and higher-order discussion among student and teacher before, during and after reading.
What can Students do as a Result of Transformational Reading Instruction?

When teachers can choose from a range of research-based and theoretically grounded instructional approaches, their students learn how to choose from, apply, and reflect on diverse strategies as they take up the varied purposes, subjects, and genres that present complex challenges for readers. As readers, we talk to others about what we are reading. These interactions expand and strengthen our comprehension and interpretation. In these interactions, we learn to read critically, to question what we read, and to respond in a certain way. We learn to ask:

- What is this text trying to do for me?
- Who benefits from this point of view?
- What reading strategies must I utilize to access depth of understanding of this text?

These questions help us uncover underlying assumptions and motives that otherwise operate invisibly. As a result of transformative reading instruction, students will demonstrate the following competencies:

1. Students use a variety of strategies to derive meaning from texts and increase comprehension. These metacognitive strategies include:
   a. Summarizing
   b. Inferring
   c. Asking and answering questions about texts
   d. Using text structures to make sense of and remember information
   e. Visualizing

2. Students use a variety of methods to increase vocabulary, including finding appropriate meaning, identifying parts of words, looking for context clues, and use of reference materials.

3. Students analyze, comment on, compare, and share their thinking about what they’ve read through learning-focused “talk.”

4. Students make their thinking visible about what they have read through writing.

5. Students read multiple texts focused on the same topic and can make text-to-text connections and can compare and contrast these texts.

6. Students demonstrate understanding and are able to synthesize, and evaluate texts.
7. Students use formative assessment of their own learning to monitor progress daily.

The importance of involving families and community partners as a collaborative partner in the development of language and literacy requires a commitment to working together in and out of the school classroom. Educators help families and community partners add to their repertoire of strategies by promoting literacy at home. Success requires a strong collaboration, with support for students provided at home and school.

REFERENCES