



Reading Comprehension: Comparing High & Low Achievers

Est. Time: 90 Minutes

Objective

To understand the difference in how low-achieving and high-achieving students approach academic reading tasks and employ reading comprehension strategies.

Overview

Reading in the content areas (e.g., social studies, science) is quite different from reading for enjoyment. Successful performance of middle and high school students in content areas depends on strong academic literacy skills. A surprising number of middle and high school students lack academic literacy skills and would benefit from explicit content-area reading instruction. This is especially the case for students with a learning disability (LD) because they often have difficulty processing information, which affects their ability to comprehend text. This puts them at greater risk for reading comprehension problems. Even those who are efficient at decoding words often do not use strategies to monitor their understanding of the text as they read, make connections to what they already know, or identify relevant information in the text. In spite of this need, students generally do not receive this type of instruction in the content areas. Perhaps chief among the reasons why is simply that teachers assume students already possess such skills, having picked them up in the earlier grades.

Activity

1. Make a list of the reasons you think your low-achieving students struggle. Do you think they could benefit from explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies? Do you think that your high-achieving students would also benefit from explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies?
2. Administer the attached questionnaire [see the end of this document], the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARS) Version 1.0, to a minimum of four students in your classroom (two low-achieving students and two high-achieving students).



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Questions/Discussion Topics

1. Compare the use of reading strategies by the low-achieving and high-achieving students.
2. Prior to administering the evaluation, why did you think the low-achieving students struggled? Did the results of the evaluation confirm your suspicions, or did they reveal something unexpected?
3. Prior to administering the evaluation, did you ever consider that the low-achieving students could benefit from explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies? After reviewing the results, do you still feel the same way?
4. After reviewing the results, do you think that the high-achieving students would also benefit from explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies?