



# Selecting appropriate reading strategies

*There is much discussion concerning the multitude of different reading strategies we could use in our classrooms, but how do we know if a reading strategy is one that will provide a balanced literacy program for our students?*

## Ask yourself these three simple questions.

1. Does it help struggling readers make sense of the reading process?
2. Does it result in improved reading proficiency?
3. Does it make reading more fun?

Effective reading strategies should be purposeful and interactive, develop and promote independence, be student-centred and be presented in a meaningful context.

## Have you tried these strategies?

- Reading aloud to your class every day
- Shared reading
- Hints for 'when you're stuck'
- Guided reading
- Providing opportunities for independent student reading in class time
- Focusing on comprehension
- Teaching specific skills in context
- Reading in the content area
- Collaborative reading
- Exposing students to different genres
- Linking reading and writing
- Literature circles (grouping by book choice and interests)
- Modelling thought processes using prior knowledge, predictions and analysis
- Evaluating higher-level thinking processes
- Measuring success by observation of student's reading habits and attitude to reading

Examples of the benefits and limitations of the first three of the listed strategies are summarised below.

### Reading aloud

The teacher reads texts including poetry, short stories, picture and chapter books, as well as nonfiction, including magazine and newspaper articles and student writing.

The benefits include: students are exposed to different forms of literature, they become familiar with the conventions and language of books, develop an interest and love of reading by learning that books are worthwhile and fun, and have the opportunity to listen to modelled, fluent reading.

The limitations are that students do not read themselves or even view and follow the text and that their individual levels of comprehension and language development will differ.

### Shared reading

The students and teacher together read and reread text, including poems, songs, big books, student writing and class books.

The benefits include: students are ensured of success by the support provided by their peers and can enjoy texts they could not read alone, they can develop fluency and expression through modelling, and can focus on concepts of print and make phonemic connections within the context of the material read.

A limitation is that some students may be reluctant to read alone.

### Hints for students when they are stuck and stop reading

Students (and their parents) need clear, explicit strategies to help the students become independent readers.

**Step 1.** Think! What is the sentence about?

**Step 2.** Reread the sentence. Read the first part of the word and ask, 'What word would make sense?'

**Step 3.** Try it; if it makes sense read on. If not, try to break the word into parts and look for parts you know.

**Step 4.** If all else fails, ask a friend.

The benefits are that students develop independent reading skills, focus on content and enjoy the text more.

A limitation is that many parents will need some time to become familiar with and accept this strategy, preferring to simply tell the child the word or to demand that the word, often phonetically irregular and challenging, is 'sounded out'.

### REMEMBER:

Explicit instruction in effective reading and writing strategies is essential and should be identified and modelled for students in different contexts.

Ongoing assessment of student progress can be monitored through running records and miscue analysis, checklists of specific skills, anecdotal records, audio and video tapes and student self assessment.