

# More about Reciprocal Teaching

## Organisation

Reciprocal teaching may be used as one of several teaching techniques within a balanced reading program. It provides the opportunity for reading by the students. The four strategies of Reciprocal Teaching are predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarising.

Teachers engage students with the four strategies through a process in the classroom.

- the whole class is introduced to the four strategies.
- a selected group or groups are instructed about the strategies and given practice with them until they are well established
- the whole class may then use Reciprocal Teaching in groups while the teacher moves between groups

Reciprocal Teaching may be used as a means of allowing a group access to a piece of challenging text..Depending on the level of challenges in the text, various pieces of text could be used in the following ways:

- Reciprocal Teaching for able readers: shared reading for the rest of the class
- Reciprocal Teaching for average readers: independent reading for able readers, and shared reading for the rest of the class (less able readers)
- Reciprocal Teaching for less able readers: independent reading for the rest of the class.

Reciprocal Teaching can be used to provide an intensive focus on meaning making. This approach is useful for students in Years 5–8 who are able to read the text accurately but have limited understanding of what they read. It is also useful for Years 9–10 students to access complex challenging texts.

- introduce the group to the approach (this may take up to five sessions)
- follow with reciprocal teaching practice for several more consecutive sessions while gradually transferring the role of the teacher to the learners.

## Benefits of Reciprocal Teaching

Learners can gain an improved understanding of complex text in content areas. This leads to:

- greater knowledge of the topic
- improved skills
- more positive attitudes when extracting, organising, and recording information
- more self confidence and motivation to read
- improved leadership skills
- increased co-operation and greater initiative.

Studies have shown that when Reciprocal Teaching is implemented, learners make substantial gains in understanding what they read.

## How to implement Reciprocal Teaching

The strategies can be introduced to the whole class. It is important to select texts that are at an appropriate level just beyond what students can read unsupported.

Teachers should:

- be familiar with the text
- provide a brief, focussed introduction
- where appropriate, link the text being read to current content areas (this will give added purpose to the learner's reading)
- model the strategies and support learners in using them
- regularly monitor learners' use of strategies
- use the information gained through monitoring as a guide to the further support and practice needed by the learners.

During the group session, learners discuss the text only in small chunks. After reciprocal reading, the learners should read the whole text to themselves.

## Predicting

The learner is anticipating what will come next in the text, based on appropriate prior knowledge and on the structure and content of the text.

Predicting is purpose setting where learners read to confirm or reject their hypotheses. Predicting encourages learners to actively think ahead.

## Clarifying

When clarifying, learners are dealing with difficulties in the text by being alert to:

- unfamiliar vocabulary
- text which is structured or set out in an unfamiliar way
- new or difficult concepts
- when they lose track of the meaning.

After recognising the problem, learners can employ a 'fix up strategy' to restore meaning, for example:

- re-reading
- using the context of the passage
- using their knowledge of written language, for example, vocabulary, structure, grammar

- using a dictionary or thesaurus to check meaning. Using other reference materials such as an atlas, road map.

To understand the meaning it may be necessary for the learners to read the whole passage again,

## **Questioning**

When questioning, the learner is exploring the meaning of the text in depth. Questioning gives the learner an opportunity to:

- identify the kind of information that provides the substance for an appropriate question
- frame questions – before, during and after the reading.

When suitable questions have been asked, the learner can then:

- offer possible solutions
- find relevant information to answer questions
- monitor their own comprehension
- help other learners answer questions they have.

Learners become much more involved in the reading activity when they are posing and answering questions themselves, rather than merely responding to the teacher's questions or to pre-set questions. Questioning is a means of self-checking.

## **Summarising**

When summarising, the learner is identifying and integrating important information presented in the text. The learner needs to:

- initially identify the most important content of the reading section
- integrate and own the information which indicates understanding.