



OPCE Creating Smart & Good Schools Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 3
March 2009

Smart & Good “Spa”: Strategies for Rejuvenation

This issue of the Smart & Good “Spa”—Strategies for Rejuvenation newsletter focuses on questioning strategies. It probably wouldn’t surprise you that asking questions is the second most common instructional strategy used by teachers. Teachers ask about 300-400 questions a day—sometimes at the rate of 120 per hour! Teachers use verbal questioning for multiple reasons- to check students' class work and homework, review and summarize lessons, and evaluate students' learning. But verbal questioning can also be used to help students develop performance character traits—such as motivating them to pay attention, prompting self-reflection and self-assessment of understanding, respect for others, diligence—in addition to helping develop thinking skills, inquiry skills and synthesize information. The QAR strategy—“Question Answer Relationships” focuses on helping students recognize where to find answers to questions, which will improve their learning, test-taking, and study skills.

“Have a heart that never hardens, a temper that never tires, a touch that never hurts.”

Charles Dickens (1812-70), novelist

Spa Treatment #3:

Question—Answer Relationships (QAR)*

PURPOSE:

The purpose of QAR is to help students recognize 4 types of questions and where and how to find answers to them by reading and thinking (see chart on page 2). This can be used at any grade level and is especially helpful for students who struggle with reading and answering questions about text. This is excellent preparation for tests!

DEVELOPS PERFORMANCE CHARACTER TRAITS:

Self-discipline, diligence, perseverance, self-assessment. Students also develop cooperation when they work in groups.

Continued on page 2

*adapted from: Allen, J. (2004) Tools for Teaching Content Literacy; and Sadler, C. (2001) Comprehension Strategies for Middle Grade Learners.

Spa Treatment #3: QAR (con't)

PREPARATION:

If this is a new concept for students, it can take 3 or 4 lessons to introduce the concepts before students are able to use the procedure on their own. You will need make a chart or handout of what “QAR” are (see text box on right), select several practice (short) text assignments for students to read and develop questions for each passage that illustrate each type of question to use for practice.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Chart/handout of QAR (feel free to add graphics), short text assignments, handouts with text, and QAR sample questions and answers

PROCEDURE:

- Lesson 1—Introduce and model the concept.**
Introduce the concept of QAR’s by showing students the chart of QAR’s (handout or classroom display) with a short explanation of each type of question. You can create the questions yourself or use ones from the textbook. As a group, read a short passage (about 1 paragraph) together (silently, depending on the ability level of your class or teacher reads orally). Then ask one type of question from each QAR type, demonstrating out loud your thinking processes (like a Think Aloud*) as to how you find the answer to the question. Emphasize the performance character traits you are trying to develop—that it takes persistence, effort, self-discipline, etc.
- Lesson 2—Practice the concept in a group.** Assign another short passage for students to read . Give students questions of each type and have students work in groups to identify the type of question and find the answers. For very young or low ability students you can add a lesson where you give them the question, answers, and identify the QAR and have them discuss why each question has that QAR.
- Lesson 3— Practice writing questions in a group.** Assign another passage and ask each group to write 2 questions for each QAR category. After they have finished, have them exchange questions with another group and work collaboratively to answer the questions and identify the QAR. At this point, students may debate the “accuracy” of the QAR

Question-Answer Relationships

Where do I find the answers to the questions?

RIGHT THERE:

The answer is in the text. The words used in the question and words used for the answer are often in the same sentence or paragraph.

THINK AND SEARCH/PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The answer is in the text, but the words used in the question and those for the answer would not be in the same sentence. You need to think a lot about the sentences before you can answer the question.

ON YOUR OWN:

The text got you thinking, but the answer is inside your head. So think about it and use what you know to answer the questions.

WRITER AND ME:

Some of the information is in the text and some of it comes from what you already know.

the group intended—but this means the students have read the material, and are critically thinking about it!

FOLLOW-UP/REINFORCING ACTIVITY:

Have students continue to practice identifying QAR’s of questions on text assignments as homework until they are proficient. If your students have the opportunity to mentor or tutor younger students, have them teach this strategy to them. Keep a visual reminder in your classroom if possible.

*Not sure what a “Think Aloud” is?

Simply stated, a Think Aloud is modeling your thinking processes out loud to students so they can understand them and be encouraged to use them themselves. Research has shown that some poor readers lack these self-assessing and reflective thinking strategies and that modeling them can help.