



# Turning the Page

## What Really Matters to Students

**A**s I started thinking about this newsletter and the start of a new school year, I decided to go back to the first newsletter from 2006. This reflection led me to two insights about the SCRI Literacy Initiative at RVHS.

*“In the future, how we educate our students may prove to be more important than how much we educate them.”*

~Thomas Friedman  
*The World Is Flat*

1) We’ve come a long way in our understanding of struggling readers and how

we can reach them.

2) We have a long way to go.

In *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers*, Dick Allington talks about The 100/100 Goal. “Imagine that we could design schools where 100 percent of the students were involved in instruction appropriate for their needs 100 percent of the day. Imagine how different the achievement pattern of struggling readers might be.”

100% sounds like a lofty goal, but doable. So, where do we begin?

1. Students need to read a lot if they are to become good readers. “Reading is like other human proficiencies—**practice matters.**” Allington says.

2. Students need books they can read. All readers prefer reading that is less demanding. If we liked hard reading, then *Scientific American* would outsell *People*, but it doesn’t (Allington). **Match the reader and text level.**

3. Students need opportunities to read what they choose without interruption. **Choice is key.**

4. Readers like to talk about what they have read—not take 100-question tests on what they’ve read—but talk with a friend, a peer, or the teacher. **Talk about books.**

5. Students need to read **every day** in every class.

Ridge View High School  
4801 Hard Scrabble Road  
Columbia, SC 29229

### Reading Intervention That Accelerates Reading Growth

- > Very small groups. A group = 3 or less
- > Majority of time engaged in reading
- > Match between reader and text
- > Use of texts interesting to students
- > Expanded daily reading time—90 extra minutes
- > Every teacher is a reading teacher

~Dick Allington

## Filling the Room With Wondrous Words

The writing process is critical to students’ ultimate success in the workplace. Our information-driven society demands that students become clear writers, mastering both the mechanics of writing and the ability to write creatively.

But writing doesn’t have to be five paragraphs, rough and final draft. Writing can be directions, journals, the ending of a story, posters,

book jackets, and scripts for a play. Students can write essays describing the steps in the process of long division or list the three causes of the Civil War.

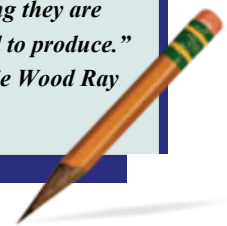
Students who use writing to organize their ideas while reading enhance their comprehension for text. Writing short, concise statements during note-taking improves both short and long term memory.

Like reading, practice with writing makes students better writers. For that reason, students should:

- write everyday in every class
- write for a variety of purposes, including personal writing
- talk and write about ideas
- get to know their teachers as writers

*“Students have the right to be shown real-world examples of the kinds of writing they are asked to produce.”*

~Katie Wood Ray



## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES & TECHNIQUES



On these two pages are simple instructional strategies and techniques designed to help struggling readers. This is not an exhaustive list; instead, it is a starting place. These strategies are painless and priceless.

If we are teachers, then we are all **reading teachers**. We want our students to read and understand the text we use in our instruction. That makes us all reading teachers. Stephanie

Harvey says, "If the purpose for reading is anything other than understanding, why read at all?" Readers take the written word and construct meaning based on their own thoughts, knowledge, and experiences, but anyone, teachers included, can struggle with text.

We spend lots of time testing comprehension, but we spend very little time teaching comprehension strategies. We confuse

explaining to students *what the text is about* with teaching students how to understand the text and what it's about. Those are not the same skills. It's important that we show students how to read the text for understanding—not just read—but to make sense of the written word.

Maybe the **file-folder** strategies that follow will help you help your students better understand your content.

### Where Do I Start?

- First, write the Anticipation Guide. Start with the big ideas or themes that are printed in the text. These are statements, such as "Ignorance is bliss," not questions.
- Plan to discuss the generalizations **before** and **after** the lesson.
- Effective Anticipation Guides present students with pertinent issues worth discussing, but there is no clear-cut answer.

### Anticipation Guides

- An Anticipation Guide is a set of generalizations related to the lesson the teacher is ready to introduce. 5 questions is enough.
- Students decide whether they agree or disagree with each statement.
- These guides activate students' prior knowledge, encourage them to make a personal connection to what they will be learning, and give them a chance to become an active participant with the text before they begin reading.
- Anticipation Guides first act as a pre-reading strategy and encourage students to connect to ideas and make predictions.
- Then, they allow students to look for cause and effect relationships as they read.
- Finally, they allow students to generalize, discuss, and to explore their own thinking about issues.

### Question Ideas



- Write one significant thing you learned today on the front of the card and one question you have about the material on the back.
- Write "I didn't know that..." on the card and briefly explain what it is.

### Exit Slips

- Exit slips are written responses to questions teacher pose at the end of class. Each question must be short and should take the students a maximum of 5 minutes to complete.
- The type of question posed by the teacher depends on what kind of response the teacher needs for a particular lesson.
- Students drop their exit slips into a box on their way out of the classroom.
- The teacher now has a quick assessment tool to better differentiate instruction and to accommodate students' needs for the next class.
- Exit slips encourage summarizing and personal reflection. They bring closure to the lesson, which engages students in processing material at a deeper level than listening to a teacher-generated review. Students rehearse & refine their new learning.

## Gist Strategy

- The **Gist Strategy** teaches students to use prediction as a comprehension aid when reading informational text. The ability to predict what a passage will be about is often based on prior knowledge. Tapping into this background knowledge increases the students' comprehension of the text to be read.
- **Prereading (PR)** - have students predict the gist, or main point, of the text by scanning the page to get a feel for what it will be about.
- **During Reading (DR)** —have students read the assigned text. This can be independent reading or partner.
- **Postreading (AR)** —have students think about what they have read and make a final revision of the gist statement. Discuss their findings.
- After this strategy has been demonstrated a few times, the students should be able to respond without the prompts, thus internalizing the process for independent use.

### Ideas for Prompts...

- What do you think this text is going to be about? (PR)
- What do you think it is going to tell us about our topic? (PR)
- Did you find evidence to support your prediction? (DR)
- Do you want to make any changes in your prediction? What changes and why? (DR)
- What have you learned from this reading? (AR)

## Written Conversation

- A **written conversation** begins with having students respond in writing to something that has been read or discussed. The teacher gives a prompt or starting point for the conversation.
- Written conversation typically involves partners. Each partner begins writing when instructed to do so. Partners exchange papers with each other based on teacher direction.
- Each person reads what the partner has written and responds in writing.
- This exchange takes place as many times as the teacher determines but usually not more than two or three times.
- Ultimately, students will move toward a natural exchange with each other based on this form of communication.
- Written conversation helps students who may be reluctant to put words on paper to overcome their insecurities by providing a safe environment to share ideas and thoughts.

**"The scariest moment is always just before you start writing. After that, things can only get better."**  
~Stephen King



## Text Rendering

- A text rendering is a **during reading** activity that creates interaction between students and text.
- Text rendering gives students a way to break down text and get at the authentic meaning—the good stuff!
- More specifically, text rendering is a process that allows students to create an understanding of text, without having meaning given or handed down to them by teachers.
- During text rendering, students read a designated portion of the text searching for the **main idea**. They mark text that is confusing, and text they want to know more about.
- Students may use sticky notes for text rendering, and then transfer their thoughts to a notebook.
- After rendering, it is important for students to **share the connections** they've made.

### Easy as 1-2-3...

1. Students **think** about what they know or have learned about the topic.
2. **Pair** each student with another student. Encourage students to share their knowledge about the topic.
3. Expand the **share** into a whole group discussion.

**THINK—PAIR—SHARE**

Ridge View High School  
4801 Hard Scrabble Road  
Columbia, SC 29229

Nicole Walker  
Literacy Coach  
nwalker@rvh.richland2.org

## An Open Letter to Teachers

It's about to get really busy if you are at all involved in education. As you gear up in whatever way that you do, I selfishly wanted to jot down a few reminders that I'd be telling myself if I were about to get started.

First, I hope you take lots of risks for the sake of learning this year. Not just for your students, but also for you. Make it a goal to try to learn something in a sustained and meaningful way that has little to do with your classroom life.

It doesn't have to be a big risk that you always take - take little ones, too. Ask the question that you're hesitant to ask. Share the writing you're doing with your students. Volunteer to do the silly dance at the assembly. Just challenge yourself a little bit every now and then. We rise to the challenge when we're pushed. But it's easy to forget to reach.

You need no one's permission to postpone a due date or modify an assignment for the benefit of a student, or to delay some grading for the benefit of yourself or your family. All will be right with the world if you're a day late, so long as you had a reason.

Be an expert when you need to be. Be a learner always.

Model always what you want your students to do. You and your behaviors and habits, no matter how much you might wish otherwise, are a curriculum of sorts, perhaps THE curriculum.

Be humble, but fight like crazy for your students.

Have at all times, as Geoff Powell says, "a healthy respect for young people."

Work on your junk detector. Teach your students to develop theirs. Read and write lots. Let your students make meaningful choices in their learning. Hold them accountable for the choices they make, good or bad.

And share the good stuff. Your stories are all human ones, and they are all special, just as each one of you, and each of your students, is special.

Be brave and humble and kind and tenacious and wise and caring and gentle and fierce. Your students so need you to do well. And there are lots of folks out there who want to help.

Do good stuff.

<http://budtheteacher.com/blog/2008/08/16/an-open-letter-to-teachers/>

*My friend, Lana Parris,  
Literacy Coach at both Walhalla  
High School and West Oak,  
sends this  
Open Letter to Teachers  
as a reminder to all of us  
what teaching is really about.  
In the chaos that accompanies  
those first few weeks of school  
it is easy to lose focus.*

*Solution: close your door, take a  
deep breath, and read something  
truly wonderful to your students—  
you will be right back on track!*

Nicole

