**Interactive Read-Alouds: The Process**

An interactive read aloud is a teaching structure or teaching frame comprised of a series of purposefully planned teaching moves and activities. The method enables the teacher to model the thinking processes of a competent reader, and also actively involve students in the meaning making process.

Interactive read-alouds helps teachers make the crucial thinking processes in reading visible. Some students, particularly, struggling readers and word callers, often think that good reading means reading all the words correctly and quickly. For these students good reading is simply limited to fluency and decoding. They are unable to “see” the thinking processes that take place in the minds of proficient readers. Through interactive read-alouds, teachers can model good reading and comprehension behaviors needed before, during, and after reading.

Because students find read-alouds compelling and enjoyable, it is an ideal teaching platform from which to offer students an introduction to the big thinking work of reading. Read-alouds provide teachers with a means to have students experience all the components of meaning making. Through the read-aloud, teachers can explicitly provide students with the work of inferring, understanding, and evaluating that often stays invisible.

Being exposed to how the big work of reading actually happens enables students something concrete to transfer to their independent reading. It also offers a common language to refer to when talking to students about the reading process.

The read-aloud also enables the teacher to invite the students into the thinking and problem solving inherent in reading for meaning. The structure helps young readers “see” how an expert reader thinks their way through the text to make meaning, and also enables students to actively participate.

**How to Address Vocabulary in the Read-Aloud**

Two important considerations that teachers address are teaching students the vocabulary frequently found in the STAAR Reading Test, and vocabulary unfamiliar to students. STAAR vocabulary should be purposefully included in the read-aloud. When planning a lesson vocabulary words (DEFINED AS USED IN STAAR QUESTIONS) such as CONVEY, BENEFIT, AND FACILITATE should be used purposefully and repeatedly as appropriate when reading aloud.

Because some read-aloud texts may not include academic and/or STAAR vocabulary, teachers can substitute these more sophisticated words as they talk and read-aloud. For example, if reading that the character received a gift, the teacher can say that the character received a benefit and define the meaning as appropriate.

**U**nfamiliar vocabulary is treated in context by providing a brief explanation of words. Unfamiliar or technical vocabulary essential to understanding the text should be presented before the read-aloud. Vocabulary the teachers decides is problematic or students will need often in their reading can be treated before, during, or after reading.

**Stopping Points**

**S**topping points are places in the text where the teacher stops and thinks-aloud to model the thinking process or strategy needed to make meaning or solve an unknown word.Stopping points are identified during the planning of the read-aloud. A simple technique is to place a sticky note on the page with the think-aloud scripted.

Invite students to watch how you think and problem solve. Say something like, “When I stop to think-aloud, your job is watch in a way that will help you do similar thinking when you are reading.” It is helpful to demonstrate how it looks when you are reading and how it looks when you think aloud.

Inform the students that they will have an opportunity to perform similar thinking during the read-aloud and independent reading. Invite students to turn and talk to a partner at selected stopping points that you have identified to actively participate.

For narrative text, the important stopping points are character ACTIONS, INTERACTIONS, THOUGHTS, FEELINGS and CHANGES the character experiences. A useful acronym to teach for these important element is FACT! with the ! representing character interactions.

**Prior Knowledge**

Scaffolding on prior knowledge requires that the teacher helps students to make predictions and connections to what the student already knows. This is especially critical when reading aloud informational text for deeper comprehension.

**Emphasizing Text Structures for Informational Text and Elements of Story for Narrative text.**

When you choose a narrative text for an interactive read-aloud, be certain to note in the think-aloud the authors craft and the elements of the story. Elements of a story are generally concerned with setting, characters, and the plot (problem and solution) in the primary grades. In third grade and beyond story elements in narrative text may include such things as conflict, flashbacks, and other elements.

For nonfiction, it is important to teach students to convert the title and heading into 5WH questions-WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHY, WHERE, and HOW. This supports determing the main idea of the section.

For texts without heads, teach students to create headings by gathering sentences and paragraphs that deal with the same idea or concept. This can be challenging work for students and should be introduced only after students have demonstrated proficiency for converting tittles and headings into relevant questions.