This pamphlet is intended to provide teachers with a sampling of before, during and after reading strategies that are appropriate for use in K-12 classrooms. Suggestions for authentic reading assessment practices are also included.
Diagnostic Assessment Methods

Before selecting strategies it is important to find out what the students already know and are able to do. Informal, class-wide screening is useful way to gather relevant information to teachers for the majority of students. A few simple activities can be performed to find out:

- What is the range of reading and writing levels?
- What level of ability is there?
- What kind of help is needed?

These activities should assess and build background knowledge, set a purpose for reading by making the text relevant and interesting, and allow students to share personal experiences and perspectives regarding a specific topic or character.

**SORT AND PROJECT**

A vocabulary building strategy in which students are given key words that are compiled from their reading. In groups, students categorize the words according to what the reading will be about. Then they read and check their predictions in a discussion. After the reading, a variation of this activity is to give students illustrations or other graphics from the text instead of words.

**VOCABULARY ALERT**

The teacher selects a word she predicts the students will have difficulty with and writes them on the overhead. Students rate the words with a 1, 2, or 3. (1: I’ve heard it and used many times; 2: I’m somewhat acquainted with; 3: I’ve never heard it before.) The teacher ignores the words that receive a 1 rating, marking in class discussion the words received the 2 and directly to the 3.

**KWL (WHAT KNOW, I WOULD LEARN)**

Students access their prior knowledge about a topic, then read more about it. They list their knowledge in the first column (K) of a three column chart. Then, they fill in the second column (W) with questions about the topic. After reading, they fill in the third column (L) and discuss their findings.

**TEXT FEATURE SURVEY**

Students work in groups to list all the features of the text that could help them read it. They should list the features and explain how they can use each one as they read. Usually noted items include bold or italicized words, chapter and section headings, subheadings, word or concept definitions in the side margins, chapter summaries, glossaries, pronunciation guides, chapter questions, diagrams and other graphics.

**THINK,_pair, share**

Ask students to reflect on what they already know about a topic in a limited amount of time. If the topics being discussed is a partner or in a small group. In some cases, it is helpful to give the students some prior knowledge as a jumping-off point before discussing this activity. In this scenario, the teacher would share what he or she knows about a topic before asking the students to do the share-pair-share.

**ENDING FIRST**

Tell the students the end of the reading selection and have them predict the beginning. This might be most appropriate with short items like newspaper articles or poetry. Students should also justify their answers as part of this activity.

**STICKY NOTES**

This is a good and simple method to evaluate tutor sessions. If a tutor is using a prepared script, ask the student to read it and then ask for a summary of the material. Ask the student to list the main points of the material. Ask the student to state the main points of the material. Ask the student to state the main points of the material.

The following activities provide samples of informal diagnostic assessment.

**GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENT READING ABILITY**

Select a section from a chapter of one of the textbooks you are using or a grade-appropriate short story. Introduce the selection by building some background and teaching key vocabulary. Have the students read silently the selection and then answer a series of questions about it. Include questions which ask about main ideas, require the students to make inferences and ask for a personal response. For non-fiction, require the students to refer to a graphic illustration in order to answer both literal and inferential question.

**READING AIDS**

Ask each student and prepare ahead of time a short passage (one or two paragraphs) to read aloud to you. As each student reads, check:

- Did the student prepare ahead of time?
- Is the student able to read fluently?
- What level of difficulty was the material that the student was able to read fluently?
- Did the student read correctly all words?
- Is the reading rate appropriate?

**REAL READING IN Pairs or GROUPs**

Have the students read with a partner, everyone in the class reading at once, as they were in the norm from group to group listening on the partner’s reading. A similar effect can be achieved using a time-sharing device, such as a tape recorder, for each student taking at least one part.

**READING RESPONSE**

After students have read a short story, poem or article, ask them to write a personal response to the piece. Tell them you will be looking for their ability to:

- express opinions
- support their opinions
- describe personal connections with the reading

Learning to read is a very complex process and there is no one strategy or philosophy that is right for everyone. There are three things to keep in mind:

1. There are three reading systems used when a person reads: the graphophonic, the synthetic and the semantic. Because each is essential to comprehending a text, neither a purely whole language nor phonics approach is appropriate. Both are necessary. Comprehension requires that readers use all three cuing systems to help construct meaning, but one or more of these strategies are also necessary. The reader constructs meaning by blending prior knowledge—that is, knowledge the reader already has—with information provided by the text in the context of the reading situation. Good teaching allows students to access prior knowledge and provides a variety of reading strategies that tap into all the cuing systems—thus creating fluent readers.

2. These activities should access and build background knowledge, set a purpose for reading by making the text relevant and interesting, and allow students to share personal experiences and perspectives regarding a specific topic or character.

3. Students should multi-task, using multiple systems of information to support, complement and enhance their reading. This can be accomplished by increasing reader awareness of the whole language, language and word choice and facilitating comprehension of the text by using appropriate strategies. Students should be encouraged to slow down the reading and decide for themselves which form of note-taking will work best. Two column notes have main ideas on the left side and supporting details on the right. Four column notes include vocabulary questions the students have about the content, answers to questions and other details and diagrams. For fiction, two column notes could include summary on the left and questions on the right. Four column notes could include main summaric responses (illusions, reading, character, key words), questions about the story events and character behavior and answers to the questions.

**SELECTIVE UNDERDUNITING**

This is for photocopied handouts, not school textbooks. Model the process for them first on the overhead as they follow. Underline selectively, choosing phrases instead of whole sentences, naming main points with numbers or asterisks, choosing different colors for main versus supporting details, jotting notes (such as margin notes) in margins. Do the process in a “think-aloud” way so students can understand your reading/thinking processes before trying themselves.

**MAKING QUESTIONS**

Students can be encouraged to make a list of questions as they read. This can be done before reading or during reading, but should result in making the students think as they read. Students may come up with questions on their own in response to reading, but they should be encouraged to write the questions down and discuss their findings.

**THINKING AND THINKING**

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**PAUSE AND THINK**

As students read, they should pause and think to check their understanding. This can be a written or spoken process, but it should always involve reflection about reading. Ask students to say things like, “What did I think about this before I read it? What did I think about this after I read it?”

**THOUGHT-FITTING/VOCABULARY**

Ask students to mentally picture in their heads as they read. If they find this difficult, tell them to either slow down and concentrate on the individual onsets or to actually shut their eyes every few paragraphs to reduce distraction and thus concentrate on their visualization.

**NOTE TAKING: 2-COLUMN NOTES, 4-COLUMN NOTES**

Various forms of note-taking can both help quick student read-in and improve their study habits. Students should be encouraged to slow down the reading and decide for themselves which form of note-taking will work best. Two column notes have main ideas on the left side and supporting details on the right. Four column notes include vocabulary questions the students have about the content, answers to questions and other details and diagrams. For fiction, two column notes could include summary on the left and questions on the right. Four column notes could include main summaric responses (illusions, reading, character, key words), questions about the story events and character behavior and answers to the questions.

**SIMPLER- SHORT AND SHOOTER**

Students select, reject, and paraphrase to arrive at the main points as they read. Less successful summarizers read quickly and begin writing immediately. Successful summarizers read slowly, repeat reading (to monitor accuracy of their selections) and take notes as they go before writing. Teacher modeling with think-alouds is a great help to begin summarizing. When summarizers get quite skilled, encourage them to write the more difficult one sentence summary.

**SOURCE OF ERRORS**

Students create a flow chart or time line of events in the order they occurred. The events sequence should include both words and illustrations as students note the details of what they read.

**FACT, FIGURE, S. & H.**

Create a chart with the headings What, Why, When, Where, and How. Have the students fill in the chart on their own. As they read, point to events and see if they can find the answers with clues like context or the images. This strategy is considered an excellent if not the best, way to assess student reading. Teachers should observe through anecdotal evidence or more formal strategies such as oral reading that is based on reading.

**PMI CHART**

PMI stands for plus, minus, and interesting. Have the students, as they read, note any items that plus, minus, or interesting. From summarizing an issue into the time column, students can use their information on other chart groups and explain their opinions on the topic.

**STICKY NOTES**

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**GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS**

Initially the organizer should be provided by the teacher. After students should be encouraged to invent or choose their own organizer after skimming the first few clues as to what type of organizer would be the best to use or create. The act of skimming becomes the before reading activity. Filling in and sharing or writing the organizer are the during and after reading activities. Examples of graphic organizers are the KWL chart, the PMI chart, the Venn diagram, sequence of events, target analysis. Other graphic organizers might follow the “shape” of the reading an inverted triangle for the newspaper diary example, or 5 boxes for the classic 5 paragraph essay.
**School-Based Reading Programs**

Powerful reading programs are characterized by the following attributes:

- **Teachers and Students Read Aloud**
  Students need to hear good reading models in order to become familiar with the patterns and rhythms of written language.

- **A Literacy Rich Environment**
  A variety of high-quality, age-appropriate reading materials is necessary for every classroom environment. Both fiction and non-fiction resources that are suitable for a range of reading abilities and interests should be included.

- **Reading For Pleasure**
  The reading time you provide in class may be the only time that some of your students engage in sustained silent reading; therefore, it is essential that classroom time be provided for this activity.

- **Home/School Links**
  Encourage parents to support their child’s reading development. They can help by taking their child to the library, being reading role models at home, and discussing what is being read with their child.

- **Integrate and Authentic Language Activities**
  Integrate the activities of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing in order to show students the connections between the varied uses of language. This also allows students to perceive how language is used differently depending on context and purpose. Students need authentic (meaning “relates to the world outside school”) audiences, purposes and materials for reading, writing, listening and speaking because motivation or engagement is increased when such tasks are provided.

- **Recognition of Students’ Interests and Backgrounds**
  It is important to find out about your students’ reading interests, backgrounds, abilities and learning styles. Teachers can play an important role both in accommodating these different needs as well as in extending students’ learning by broadening their areas of strength.

- **Provide Explicit Instruction**
  Modelling provides explicit instructions in the “what”, “when”, and “why” of reading strategies; students profit from this explicit instruction in reading. Students need to know what a strategy is; how to use it; and when and why it should be used. For example, a student should understand what a main idea is, how to figure it out while reading and why it helps to think about the main idea.

- **Allow Students to Work in a Variety of Groupings**
  The meaning in reading can be clarified, extended and revised through discussion and other methods. Groupings of all sizes allow students to improve their reading skills in a variety of contexts; this range of situations reflects the world outside of school.

**References**


Santa, Dr. Carol Minnick. Project CRISS: Creating Independence Through Student Owned Strategies 2nd ed. 1996