



Literacy Connects

*A Content Literacy Newsletter from Regional
Professional Development Program-Issue XXIII*



Scaffolded Reading Experience: Building a purpose for reading

The beginning of the school year is the perfect time to discuss and model active reading in all subject areas. Reminding students of the importance of the reading process and modeling reading using the “Think Aloud” will allow students to see and hear how a strong reader makes sense of difficult text (See *Literacy Connects #1* for The Think Aloud). The Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE) is a strategy that uses all parts of the reading process, works well as a “Think Aloud” and is flexible enough to be used in all subject areas, with all levels of readers (Graves & Graves, 1994).

Scaffolding refers to the degree of support a teacher must provide to enable students to read more difficult texts. Initially, struggling readers will require a high level of support and more able students less. Before using SRE, consider the needs of your students, the difficulty of the text and the purpose for the assigned reading. This will determine how much scaffolding you will need to provide for your class.

1. **Pre-reading Stage:** In order to build background knowledge before students begin reading, either show a picture that relates to the theme of the reading or have students browse the chapter of their text noting illustrations, graphs and/or headings. Have students work in pairs to answer these questions: What does this picture(s) remind you of? Judging from the illustrations and captions, what do you think this chapter/reading is about? or What do you know about this topic? These questions will trigger students’ prior knowledge and help build interest. Next, help students “fill in the blanks” by giving a brief overview of what will be presented in the text. Use only general, non-specific information that requires further investigation by the students to build connections between their prior knowledge and the information they will be reading. Model this step by showing students how you preview and predict content before reading. At this point, you can also identify and explain difficult vocabulary words in the text to support comprehension.
2. **During Reading Stage:** Develop broad, open-ended study guide questions to support student reading of the text. Refer back to your initial planning stage and write questions that match the learning/reading needs and interests of your students and the purpose you set for the reading. Ask yourself questions like: What do my students need to know about this chapter? What do they already know? How can I help them connect prior knowledge to new learning? How can I pique their interest in this material? Students can complete this in pairs or individually (see *Literacy Connect #13* for peer reading ideas). As the year progresses, you can pose fewer questions as students become more proficient readers.
3. **Post Reading Stage:** Once students have finished the reading, help them process and connect to what they have learned through critical response to the text. They can write summaries (See *Literacy Connects #5* for summarizing) or choose from a selection of assignments. Following are a few creative ways to motivate student response: Creating posters that answer questions from the study guide, using a list of stems from Bloom’s Taxonomy to create questions for other classmates to answer, writing from the perspective of someone or something in the text (see *Literacy Connects #7* for R.A.F.T.) or creating a Podcast or PowerPoint.

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