

Teaching Reading in Social Studies

A Supplement to
*Teaching Reading in the Content Areas
Teacher's Manual (2nd Edition)*

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MREL

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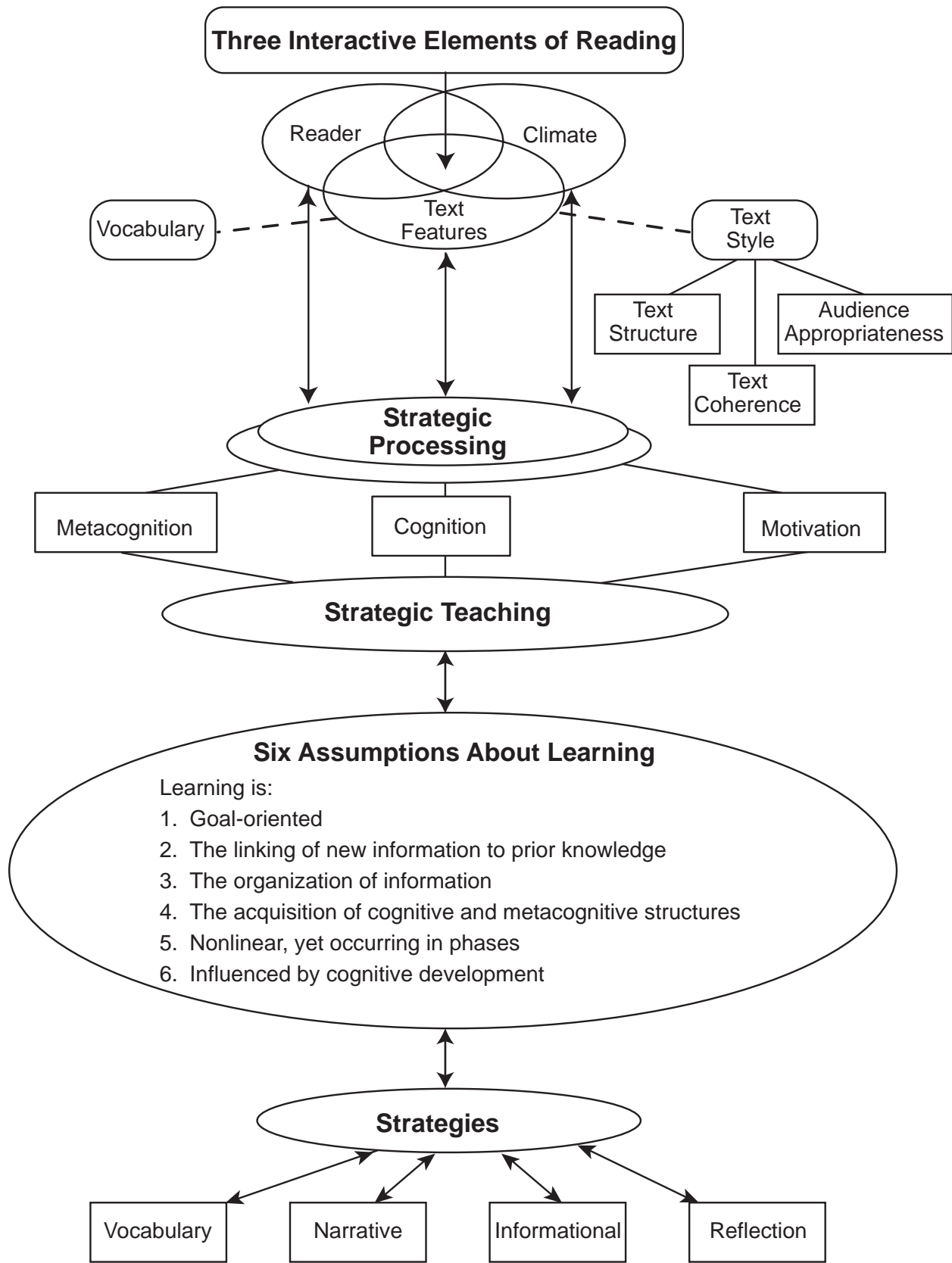


Figure 1. Model of Teaching Reading in the Content Areas

Rationale

“The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.”

— National Council of Social Studies

Working with students to help them gain the knowledge and skills necessary to become informed decision makers in a democratic society is a powerful responsibility. The study of social studies is much more than memorizing historical facts; geographical statistics; or government, civic, and economic terminology. It is really about problem solving, decision making, reflective inquiry, and critical thinking. More than any other academic area, it is about helping students become strategic thinkers responsible for decisions that impact our society. They must be strategic in their reading and be able to comprehend and use what they read to make informed decisions and choices in the world in which they live.

Consider the story of a teacher’s encounter with the parent of a first grade student: The week before school began the parent brought her daughter to meet the teacher. The parent proudly stated to the teacher that her daughter was quite bright and could already read. She went on to say that her daughter could even read *The New York Times*.

The teacher was impressed but also a little concerned. If all of her students were like this student, she would need to rethink her teaching strategies in reading. She acknowledged the child’s accomplishment and asked the parent the following question: “When you discuss what your daughter has read, how well does she understand the content of that reading and use that information to make connections to the real world?”

The parent hesitated for a moment. She looked at the teacher and smiled. “She doesn’t. In fact, I guess what I am really saying is that she knows the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make, and I considered that as reading.”

What the parent described is part of the reading process but only part. It is decoding, part of “learning to read,” and while it is essential for students to be phonologically aware and fluent in the reading process, without comprehension they are just dancing across the words. Students need to be able to “learn to read” so they can “read to learn”

at all ages in all content areas. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and it is here, that as teachers of social studies content, that the struggle for reading comprehension becomes very real.

Teaching credentials for middle school and high school teachers are usually restricted to subject-matter disciplines. Few social studies teachers have a background in reading, and many have taken only one or two courses in college related to teaching reading. Because of this, they may feel insecure and not experienced enough to teach reading in the social studies classroom.

In his article “Exploring Reading Nightmares of Middle and Secondary School Teachers,” Bintz (1997) described a few assumptions made by teachers in those grade levels about reading and reading instruction:

- Reading instruction is primarily, if not exclusively, the role of elementary, not middle and secondary, school teachers.
- Reading is an isolated skill; once it is mastered in the elementary grades, students require no further direct instruction in the upper levels.

Adapted from Bintz, W. P. (1997, September). Exploring Reading Nightmares of Middle and Secondary School Teachers. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, vol. 41, No.1.12–24.

These assumptions make it seem that elementary teachers are the providers of reading instruction and further assumes that students entering middle schools and high schools should already be proficient and strategic readers. The concern here is that this assumption can be a negative factor in middle and secondary schools. Bintz goes on to say that it is a more difficult task for teachers of those grade levels to see the importance of teaching reading skills directly related to their content area.

In Doug Buehl’s “Integrating the ‘R’ Word into High School Curriculum: Developing Reading Programs for Adolescent Learners” (1998), he identifies several beliefs about adolescent literacy that underlie secondary teachers’ frustrations about reading:

- Their students come to them with experiences and attitudes that lead them to be passive readers, reluctant readers, or nonreaders.
- Inadequate teaching has contributed to the lack of reading achievement, but they feel ill-prepared to take on this challenge.
- They were trained and hired to teach content, not literacy skills.

- Their textbooks are part of the problem, but teachers feel they are often caught with a single text that does not accommodate the range of abilities in their classroom and which students do not find engaging.
- Someone else is at fault: parents, elementary school teachers, and perhaps even their colleagues. Elementary school teachers are especially singled out as culprits for the reading woes of adolescent learners.

These frustrations can impact student learning as Cris Tovani notes in her book, *I Read It, But I Don't Get It* (2000). In this book, she talks about her experience in school as a “fake reader.” She started fake reading in sixth grade by reading first and last chapters, skimming CliffsNotes™, and attending classes. In her senior year, the possibility of leaving school to attend college frightened her because she did not believe she could get by as easily as she did in high school. Determined to learn to read, she asked one of her teachers, “What do you do if you read every page but still have no idea what the book is about?” The teacher responded with, “Obviously, you weren’t concentrating. Reread the book and this time, pay attention.”

Rereading something we didn’t get the first time isn’t enough to make that information suddenly make sense. Teachers need to explicitly teach and model for students ways to monitor their thinking as they read. Students need to learn strategies that help them become better readers, reflecting on what they are understanding. Students need to know when and how to apply appropriate strategies to help them understand what they read and how to move towards comprehending when they get stuck.

How many times do teachers hear their students say as they leave for the day, “I can’t wait to get home and read my social studies book?” Teachers and schools are being asked to bring all students to a level of performance that was previously only demanded of comparatively few students. Consequently, the effort to raise the standard of teaching and learning will require teachers to be more strategic and purposeful in their planning for instruction and readers to be more strategic in the process of “reading to learn.”

The information in this manual is intended to be a resource to assist teachers. It is designed as a guidebook for instructional planning and decision making when teaching reading in social studies. It is not intended to prescribe a particular style of teaching one best “model” or method. Rather, it is meant to assist teachers as they

consider the implications of their curriculum, the nature and needs of their students, and their personal teaching styles.

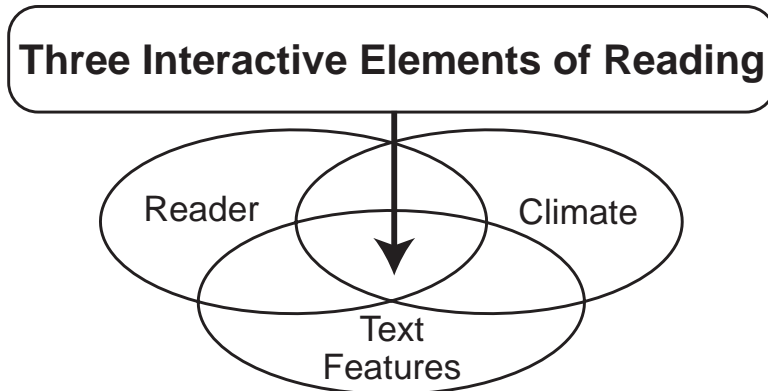
There are many aspects to consider when teaching reading in social studies. As educators, we need to understand the research around learning, the premises that guide the teaching of reading, the reading strategies that are available and when to use them, and how to use this information to have an impact on all learners. The following five areas compose this publication:

1. **The three interactive elements of the reading process that influence comprehension:**
 - What the reader brings to the situation
 - The learning climate
 - The characteristics of the text
2. **Strategic Processing:** Students must be aware of their own thinking as they read, monitor their understanding during this process, and understand the importance of both. They must be intentional when applying strategies that will help them make connections from what they read to using that information in a meaningful way.
3. **Strategic Teaching:** Teachers must be intentional in their planning for teaching reading in social studies. This section offers suggestions and techniques to do that.
4. **Six Assumptions About Learning:** The research on learning serves as the foundation for this publication, and so we discuss the critical implications.
5. **Reading Strategies:** The strategies are divided into four categories.
 - Vocabulary Development
 - Narrative Text
 - Informational Text
 - Reflection Strategies

These five sections are represented graphically in Figure 1 on page iv.

Section 1

Three Interactive Elements of Reading



Introduction

Teaching reading in social studies is not so much about teaching students basic reading skills as it is about teaching students how to use reading as a tool for thinking and learning. Research, in general, indicates that learning and reading are active processes where readers construct meaning from the words they read by interacting with the text, using prior knowledge and experience to make connections, generating hypotheses, and making sense of what they read.

If students are to construct their own meaning from social studies text, how can teachers guide and support this process? First, they need to know the five premises cognitive scientists have identified. Secondly, they need to understand how the reader, climate, and text work interactively to help a reader construct meaning from text.

The Five Premises

1. Readers **construct meaning** from what they read by making logical and sensible connections between the new information and what they already know about the topic.
2. Researchers believe we store what we know in knowledge frameworks called "schemata." Learners refer to their schemata to make inferences and predictions, organize and reflect on new

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information, and elaborate on it (Vacca & Vacca, 1993). When readers are presented with new information, they compare it to what they already know (**prior knowledge**) and look for similarities and differences in order to make sense of what they are reading. In other words, they try to match new information with existing schema so that it can be understood.

Try reading the paragraph below and filling in the missing words. As you work on the passage, think about your own thinking.

In the early 1860s, A_____ issued the Emancipation _____ . This order freed millions of s_____. The C_____ had the authority to enforce this order. Emancipation alone did not give the former s_____ a new life. Decades of economic hardship and unequal rights continued. A_____ plan was supported by many R_____ .

How heavily did you rely on your existing knowledge in order to complete this passage? (Check your answers on page 3).

3. How well a reader comprehends a text also is dependent on **metacognition**: the ability to think about and to control the thinking process before, during, and after reading as well as existing beliefs about the relationship between effort and achievement. Effective readers who have learned metacognitive skills can plan and monitor their comprehension, adapting and modifying their reading accordingly. Struggling readers need to be taught how to monitor their thinking as they read and how to select appropriate strategies to help them when needed.
4. **Reading and writing are integrally related.** Students who are taught to write and edit different forms of expository text improve their comprehension of their content textbooks (Raphael, Kirschner, & Englert, 1998). Both reading and writing involve

constructing ideas, organizing them in a logical order, and drafting and revising them until they make sense.

5. Students learn in many ways, and learning increases in a **collaborative** setting. Discussing what they are learning, questioning their thinking around it, and seeking clarity allows students to interact in an environment that promotes learning.

Three Key Elements

Determining what meaning a reader will take from a text involves selecting appropriate strategies aimed at comprehension as well as planning instruction around the three key elements:

1. The **reader**: his or her background experience and knowledge of the subject (Mental Dispositions, Motivation, Goal Setting, Feedback, Nonlinguistic Representation and Mental Imagery).
2. The **climate**: the learning context and environment (Brain-Based Principles, Atmosphere, Comfort, Order, Cooperative Learning, Tasks).
3. The **text features**: the characteristics of the written text (Vocabulary, Text Style).

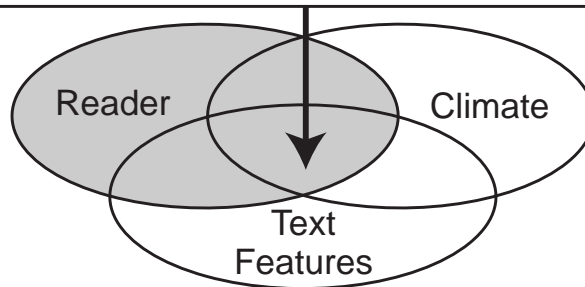
These three elements will be examined separately in the next section.

Compare the completed paragraph below with your answers from the paragraph on page 2.

In the early 1860s, **Alexander II** issued the Emancipation **Edict**. This order freed millions of **serfs**. The **Czar** had the authority to enforce this order. Emancipation alone did not give the former **serfs** a new life. Decades of economic hardship and unequal rights continued. **Alexander's** plan was supported by many **Russians**.

The Role of the Reader

Three Interactive Elements of Reading



Things to Think About

1. How do students' experiences and prior knowledge of social studies content affect their learning?
2. How do students' habits of mind influence learning?
3. How does motivation impact learning?

Prior Knowledge and Experience

No two students in any classroom will bring the same prior knowledge and experience to the reading process. They will come to the social studies classroom with varying real-life experiences. Students who are strategic readers access their prior knowledge and adjust their thinking as they encounter new information. This is a powerful skill when setting the stage for reading for meaning.

On the other hand, students who have inadequate or poorly organized and stored knowledge will likely experience difficulty as they attempt to acquire new knowledge.

Some studies show that readers who have misperceptions about a topic often overlook, misinterpret, or don't remember text information that disagrees with their background information, however incorrect that information might be (Anderson & Smith, 1984; Barton, 1997).

When this occurs, teachers can decide the type and extent of

instruction needed, align instruction that will clarify misunderstandings, and make changes in their teaching and assessment.

Proficient readers use existing knowledge to make sense of what they are reading and to determine what is important in the text. They draw inferences, generate questions, and make changes and predictions in their thinking as they read. Resnick (1984) states that three kinds of knowledge come into play: (1) specific knowledge about the topic of the text, (2) general world knowledge about social relationships and causal structures, and (3) knowledge about the text's organization.

When teachers link new information with students' prior knowledge, the topic will have more meaning for students. This helps students learn more effectively and stimulates their interest in reading.

Social studies teachers can help students activate their prior knowledge and evaluate their understandings by using pre-reading techniques.

Some of these techniques are

- brainstorming ideas that a topic brings to mind;
- previewing a passage, noting headings, bold print, and pictures;
- asking questions about the topic;
- presenting an issue or situation that needs some problem solving; and
- constructing an advanced organizer, web, or outline from passage headings for use in note taking.

Discovering what students know or do not know about a topic helps teachers design instruction around purposeful learning. Other strategies are

- K-W-L [What I Know; Want to Learn; Learned] (p. 126),
- DR/TA [Directed Reading/Thinking Activity] (p. 115),
- Semantic Mapping (p. 90),

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- Anticipation Guides (p. 110), and
- Problematic Situation (p. 135).

Mental Dispositions (Habits of Mind)

When students develop an understanding of productive mental habits they become more purposeful and strategic in their learning. Developing critical, creative, and self-regulated ways of thinking will enhance students' learning of social studies and will provide them with skills and behaviors that will increase their ability to learn, now and in the future.

A reader's habits will impact his or her effectiveness as a learner. When a reader's attitude towards reading is positive, he or she will tackle reading with enthusiasm and a willingness to learn and will

- be motivated to do what is required,
- feel confident about success,
- consider how he or she feels about the reading material,
- be interested in constructing meaning while reading, and
- integrate new meaning with existing schema.

Our mental habits impact our behaviors. Effective teachers of social studies pay particular attention to this area. They provide opportunities for students to understand the importance of having productive mental habits and model and teach these to students. (See Strategic Teaching, p. 56).

Productive mental dispositions outlined by Marzano et al. (1997), Costa (1991), Perkins (1993), and Paul (1990) include

- being accurate and seeking accuracy,
- being clear and seeking clarity,
- maintaining an open mind,
- restraining impulsivity,

- taking a position when the situation warrants it,
- persevering,
- being able to monitor and control your thinking,
- making appropriate plans,
- identifying and using necessary resources,
- responding appropriately to feedback, and
- evaluating the effectiveness of your actions.

Providing students with techniques for learning and practicing these habits is essential if they are to use them. Students who practice these behaviors become self-directed learners who are aware of their mental disposition, monitor it, and adjust it accordingly.

Motivation

Having the skill and the will to read are key factors in reading for meaning. As mentioned previously, students can be taught a strategy but may not know when or how to use it. They may have little interest in the task. They may even have the belief that they are not competent enough to complete the task. In *Designing a New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Marzano 2001) examines overall motivation. He notes that three factors come into play:

1. The individual perceives the knowledge component as important;
2. The individual believes that he or she has the necessary ability, power, or resources to learn or increase his or her competence relative to the knowledge; or
3. The individual has a positive emotional response to the knowledge component.

In contrast, when the task is not considered relevant or important, the student believes he or she may not have the necessary ability,

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knowledge, or resources to learn and be successful, and when the student has a negative association to the task, the level of motivation is low.

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) cite a set of studies that demonstrate the impact on student achievement when students are taught the correlation between effort and achievement. The authors note that since students may not be aware of the importance of believing in effort, teachers should explicitly teach and exemplify the connection between effort and achievement.

Students who make this connection recognize that effort is something they can control. In Weiner's Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1972, 1974; Weiner, Frieze, Kulka, Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971), he points out that the way students perceive the causes of their prior successes and failures is a great determiner of how motivated and persistent they will be when given a new task.

When students attribute success to ability, luck, or task difficulty, they are less likely to exert themselves and take ownership over their learning. However, when students attribute their success to effort, this can translate into the willingness to engage in and complete a task.

Having students keep track of their effort and achievement is one way they can see the correlation. Students can use rubrics to assess their effort and then chart their achievement on an assignment based on their effort score. This helps them see the relationship between effort and achievement and also helps them discover patterns between the two. Having students reflect on what they discover from doing this helps them be more aware of the power and importance of putting effort into their work. (See Strategic Teaching, pp. 57–60)

Goal Setting

Students should be encouraged and given the opportunity to personalize and set goals around a teacher's instructional target of learning. Students identify the goals they will try to reach and will contract for the grade they will receive if they meet their goals. (Kahle

& Kelley, 1994; Miller & Kelley, 1994; Vollmer, 1995). Some studies have demonstrated the positive effects when students set goals in a “contractual” context. (See Strategic Teaching, p. 48)

Feedback

Due to the large volume of information students are exposed to in social studies, teachers need to be aware of the importance of feedback for the student. Feedback that is timely is the most effective. In the Bangert-Downs, Kulik, Kulik, and Morgan (1991) study they noted the following:

- Feedback that is given immediately after a test is the most effective.
- Giving tests immediately after a learning situation has a negligible effect on achievement.
- Giving a test one day after a learning situation seems to be optimal.
- Feedback should be specific to criterion.
- Students should provide some of their own feedback.

(See Strategic Teaching, p. 61)

Nonlinguistic Representations and Mental Imagery

The “dual-coding” theory states that knowledge is stored in two forms — a linguistic form and an imagery form.

(Paivio, 1969, 1971, 1990) We store what we know in ways associated with words

(linguistic form) and with images (nonlinguistic). The Verbal Visual Word Association on page 97 of this manual is an example of this.

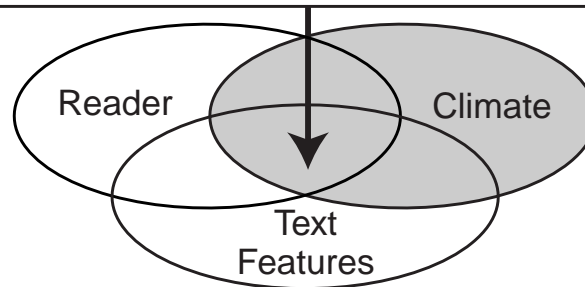
There is research that tells us we can use a variety of activities to help students represent knowledge in different ways. Research also notes that nonlinguistic representations are the most effective when students use them to elaborate on or add to their understanding.

Creating nonlinguistic representations helps students understand content in a whole new way. (See Strategic Teaching, p. 65)

Effective readers know that comprehension is not something that just happens. Readers have a role in the reading process.

The Role of Climate

Three Interactive Elements of Reading



Things to Think About

1. What does climate in the social studies classroom include?
2. How does climate affect students' attitude toward learning social studies?

Classroom climate includes the physical setting of the room and the mental climate of the students. The physical setting of the classroom should foster a climate that is learner-centered and designed to promote student learning by respecting and understanding students' differences.

A mental climate most conducive to increased learning should involve the learner and the teacher working together to create and maintain equal ownership of building and maintaining positive attitudes and perceptions.

These two aspects of classroom climate, correlated with what we know about the research on brain-based learning, give us an insight into the student as a learner.

The following principles of **brain-based** learning taken from Caine and Caine (1990) can help us better understand the student as a learner. Keeping these in mind when establishing a positive classroom climate can facilitate the learning:

- **The brain is a parallel processor.** The brain processes many functions simultaneously. It integrates emotions, thoughts,

imagination, and predispositions with the development of knowledge. In the classroom, this means the teacher needs to orchestrate an array of strategies in order to address many dimensions of brain capability.

- **Learning engages the entire physiology.** Though learning is as natural as breathing, it is possible to either inhibit or facilitate it. Neuron growth, nourishment, and synaptic interactions are stimulated by experience. Stress, threat, and boredom can shut down the brain's response to the environment while peace, motivation, and challenge encourage learning. The entire "wiring" of the brain is the result of life and school experience. In the classroom, this means that the level of maturation of children may differ as much as five years depending on each child's early experiences. It therefore makes no sense to measure achievement in relation to chronological age.
- **The search for meaning is innate.** Research confirms that people are "meaning makers" whose brains constantly gauge the familiar and seek the novel. This means that teachers should provide a level of stability and newness in classrooms that satisfies innately curious young learners. In other words, like the programs for gifted and talented, student classroom instruction needs to combine complex, meaningful challenges for all learners.
- **The search for meaning occurs through patterning.** The brain constantly seeks new patterns and then invents its own. It resists imposed, meaningless patterns unrelated to its own needs. In classrooms where ideas are presented thematically and where curriculum is integrated, students' interest is maintained because their brains will seek out the patterns teachers weave into their day. "Busywork" does little to nourish focused brain activity.
- **Emotions are critical to patterning.** Emotions are central to organizing information and to facilitating memory. The emotional impact of any lesson or life experience will continue

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to be fresh long after the event that triggered it. Classrooms that combine an emotionally supportive climate of mutual respect and student-teacher reflection on schoolwork enhance students' learning.

- **Every brain simultaneously perceives and creates parts and whole.** In healthy people, the left and right brain are inextricably interactive regardless of whether they are dealing with words, music, numbers, or art. Good teaching builds skills and understanding over time because it recognizes that knowledge is cumulative. Good lessons have a context in real life.
- **Learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes.** We learn much more than we ever consciously understand. Many of the signals we peripherally receive enter the brain without our being aware of it and interact at unconscious levels. We remember what we experience, not just what we are told. A student may learn to do a math computation in a precise manner and learn to hate math at the same time. Teachers need to provide adequate time for students to process their experiences. This allows students to review how and what they have learned so that they can begin to take charge of their own learning.
- **We have two types of memory.** The brain uses a spatial memory system and a set of systems for rote learning. Motivated by novelty, spatial memory occurs automatically, because it registers experience in three dimensions. Remembering what we had for dinner is an example of memory from the experience of eating it, as opposed to memorizing what was on the menu. Rote memory stores isolated facts and skills that are unrelated to actual experience. The more information and skills are separated from prior knowledge and actual experience, the more we depend on rote memory and repetition. Overemphasis on memorized facts in school work probably interferes with the development of

understanding and may inhibit the effective functioning of the brain.

- **The brain understands and remembers best when facts and skills are embedded in natural spatial memory.** Our language is learned through multiple interactive experiences that involve vocabulary and grammar. It also is shaped by internal processes and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Education is enhanced when this type of embedding is used. Caine and Caine (1990) note that embedding is the single most important element that brain-based learning theories have in common.
- **Learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat.** The brain learns best when challenged appropriately, but “downshifts” when a threat is perceived (Hart, 1983). The hippocampus, part of the limbic system, appears to function partially as a relay center to the rest of the brain. Under perceived threat, we literally lose access to portions of our brain (Jacobs & Nadel, 1985).
- **Each brain is unique.** Though all human brains have the same systems including our senses and basic emotions, they are integrated differently. In fact, learning changes the structure of the brain; the more one learns, the more unique one becomes. In the classroom, students are learning based on their unique set of interests.

Classrooms built on brain-based learning theory have three interactive elements: relaxed alertness, immersion, and active processing. Relaxed alertness is found in a classroom that combines a supportive environment with significant challenge. Immersion is found in classrooms where the curriculum and the life of the school are merged into real life experiences that allow students to make sense of what they are learning in the context of their lives together. Active processing encourages learners to take ownership of their learning in a way that is personally meaningful.

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Effective teachers understand the student as a learner. This knowledge, in connection with understanding of the importance of creating and maintaining positive attitudes and perceptions — their students' and their own — has a great influence on learning. The two types of attitudes and perceptions with the greatest effect on learners are a sense of acceptance and a sense of comfort and order.

Atmosphere of Acceptance

For active, critical reading to occur, teachers must create an atmosphere which fosters a climate where all students are encouraged to participate. When a student does not feel accepted by his or her teacher and peers, learning is inhibited. Students who are reluctant to ask for help, often are those who need it the most. (See Strategic Teaching, p. 61 for techniques that promote a climate of acceptance.)

Classroom Comfort

Room temperature, lighting, the arrangement of furniture, and the amount of physical activity permitted during the school day can all impact students. Findings from research on learning styles (Carbo, Dunn, & Dunn 1986; McCarthy 1980, 1990) suggest that while some students can work in an environment that is noisy, others prefer a noise-free room; some like straight rows, and others prefer clusters of desks or even tables rather than desks. When students are involved in the design of the classroom environment, the physical setting may be set up to help accommodate their diverse learning needs. (See Strategic Teaching, p. 63)

Sense of Order

Research on classroom management (Anderson, Evertson, & Emmer, 1980) shows that explicitly stated and reinforced rules and procedures create a climate that is conducive to learning. Order also gives the perception that the learning environment is safe. Maslow (1968) established the importance of a sense of safety to individuals, and Ron Edmonds (1982) noted that students must believe that the place

they spend their time learning is fairly safe. Students need to feel that there are policies and procedures in place to keep them safe and protect them, and that teachers will intervene and enforce these policies and procedures when the situation arises. (See *Strategic Teaching*, pp. 63–64)

Creating a sense of acceptance by arranging a classroom to promote learning is a fairly simple task. Teachers can make small gestures geared towards establishing a climate conducive to learning that will go a long way in making students feel valued. (See the rubric in *Strategic Teaching*, p. 64, to assess your classroom practices.)

Cooperative Learning

A classroom setting that supports cooperative learning provides students opportunities to get and give feedback from peers and to build relationships. When teachers set up groups, research notes that the dynamics of the group can increase the probability of acceptance among group members. Slavin (1987) suggests that when groups are mixed in terms of gender, ability, and ethnicity, the chance that students will feel accepted is increased. In addition, Lou and others (1996) recommend that “Small teams of three to four members seem more effective than larger groups” (p. 451).

Brophy (1983), Gottfredson (1986), and others also have noted that the use of cooperative learning structures can increase student task engagement, acquaint students with the benefits of working together, and ease the tensions that sometimes arise among racial or ethnic groups — all of which are related to reductions in the incidence of misbehavior.

Johnson and Johnson (1999) identify three types of cooperative learning groups — informal, formal, and base groups. Informal groups last a short time, from a few minutes to a class period, and usually involve pair-share type activities. Teachers use these in a variety of ways. For example, when they want students to have an

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opportunity to clarify their thinking around the task, provide time for students to discuss the learning and process it, or to give students a chance to tell someone next to them what they learned.

Formal groups include the basic components that Johnson and Johnson (1999) mention and are designed to give students more time with a peer or group of peers to complete a task that may last for several class periods, several days, or even several weeks. The basic components are

- positive interdependence,
- group processing,
- appropriate use of social skills,
- face-to-face promotive interaction, and
- individual and group accountability.

These components do not come naturally to most students so teachers need to structure groups to ensure group members are taught these components and given an opportunity to experience them.

Base groups are long term groups that may last for the semester or the year and are designed to provide students with peer support. Teachers need to structure a task and determine the purpose and outcome for the learning before assigning the type of group. For example, in a World History class students could be assigned to study groups for the length of the course. The teacher could then designate countries for each group to research.

Feeling accepted is an important aspect of a positive learning climate, and cooperative learning can promote that. The techniques described above can help teachers create this environment.

(See Strategic Teaching, pp. 62–63)

Classroom Tasks

Stating the purpose and value for a task will provide students with an understanding of why the task is important. When students perceive tasks to be valuable and interesting and understand the task and the expectations for completing the task successfully, they are more motivated to engage in the task. In classrooms where teachers have established academic trust, students are less likely to question a task's value or worth.

Furthermore, establishing criteria for performance for the task lets students know what is expected of them. Providing this information also sets the stage for them to begin the process of setting their own standards of performance and measuring their work against that.

Being conscientious about the learner and the learning environment can help create an environment conducive to learning.

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Section 4

Six Assumptions About Learning

Six Assumptions About Learning

Learning is

1. Goal oriented.
2. The linking of new information to prior knowledge
3. The organization of information
4. The acquisition of cognitive and metacognitive structures
5. Nonlinear, yet occurring in phases
6. Influenced by cognitive development

Assumption 1: Learning is Goal Oriented

In general, reader's goals are either content-related (e.g., to understand the effect xenophobia had on the growth of the Klan in the early 20th century) or strategic (e.g., to practice word attack skills within the context of reading a chapter in a civics text).

In any case, readers need to identify their purpose for reading before they begin. Too often, students open their social studies text without thinking about their purpose for reading. Teachers can help students learn how to set their reading goals by offering them a set of questions to ask themselves prior to reading:

- What key concepts and ideas are important in light of this class? Another way of phrasing this is, "What in this passage is most important to learn?" At this point, the student would preview the passage to get a sense of what it is about.
- What am I going to be expected to do with my learning — answer questions on a quiz? write a summary? participate in a class discussion? perform some activity?

The first set of questions helps students identify main ideas while they are reading, rather than reading aimlessly. For example, if a student was assigned a passage to read for homework on the Mayans, she

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could ask herself what exactly it is about the Mayans that she should pay attention to while she reads.

The second set of questions helps students determine how carefully and closely they need to read the passage, which also will help them set their reading pace. In the example above, the student may have been told that the class will write a comparison of the Mayans to the Olmecs when they return to class. Consequently, he or she would know to read the passage carefully and with a compare-contrast frame in mind. The student also would review the previously assigned chapter on the Olmecs and take notes that pull information from both passages.

Assumption 2: Learning is Linking New Information to Prior Knowledge

As discussed earlier, skilled readers use their prior knowledge of the topic to construct meaning from text. This includes making inferences, revising schema, and applying what is read to **different** phenomena. In Strategic Processing (See p. 44), we provide questions students can ask themselves as they think about their thinking and apply metacognitive strategies to monitor, modify, and process what they read.

Of course, students' ability to use their prior knowledge can be hampered by textbooks in which the writing is unclear, disorganized, or in which the relationships among ideas aren't apparent. Although skilled readers are able to impose a structure onto poorly organized text, unskilled readers really struggle when trying to make sense of information that lacks coherence. Wherever possible, social studies teachers should select text that is "considerate," uses signal words to show how ideas are related, and has easily identifiable, consistently located topic sentences.

Assumption 3: Learning is the Organization of Information

Skilled social studies readers are familiar with patterns often used by writers of social studies text. In addition, these readers have learned that certain types of social studies text will address particular information. For example, many geography books employ the “region” frame, which typically organizes content into surface features or landforms, rainfall and weather conditions, culture, location, and products as these relate to other areas under study. Although it would be unusual for adolescent readers to have that level of familiarity with geography textbooks, geography teachers can discuss the common use of this frame in geography textbooks and suggest students develop a note-taking format that is organized in this manner.

As discussed earlier, one of the best ways to help students grasp the overall organization of the text content is to walk them through the textbook table of contents and chapter layout during the first weeks of the course. When students have this kind of global understanding, they are better able to make predictions about what they read and to connect what they are reading to what has come before.

Assumption 4: Learning is the Acquisition of Cognitive and Metacognitive Structures

As discussed in Section 3, social studies teachers can help students better comprehend their text material through the direct instruction of reading strategies. They should model for students the reading strategies most helpful in navigating their textbook. For example, teachers can demonstrate how to identify bias when students are assigned to read an example of yellow journalism. Again, teachers should not only point out what they infer but also demonstrate how they find examples of bias in the passage and connect these to what students know already, so that they can see how an inference is made.

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As social studies teachers demonstrate and teach specific strategies, they also need to teach students how to transfer these strategies to different tasks. In a previous example, a geography teacher pointed out for students that geography texts typically organize information according to certain categories, such as rainfall, products, surface features, and culture. This same teacher could help students transfer this knowledge to the reading of the American history textbook by pointing out that each chapter begins with a two-page introduction that includes a time line and objectives, has text boxes that contain biographies about key people, and ends each section with a review.

Assumption 5: Learning is Nonlinear, yet Occurring in Phases

Although we have discussed reading in social studies as having separate phases (i.e., preparing to read by activating prior knowledge, reading, and then reflecting), in reality, reading to learn is not linear. Within each phase, readers are thinking about what is to come as well as thinking back to what they have read, comparing it with their prior knowledge.

Learning is essentially a start/pause process in which readers monitor their comprehension by skills such as self-questioning, looking back to verify or clarify, looking ahead to anticipate, selecting and summarizing what is important, and comparing new information to prior knowledge. (Jones, Palinscar, Ogle, & Carr, 1987, p. 18)

As previously described, teachers can demonstrate the phases of reading to learn as well as the recursive nature of their thought processes while they read a passage aloud (See the Think-Aloud strategy, p. 148).

Assumption 6: Learning is Influenced by Cognitive Development

Students who have a broad base of prior knowledge about social studies subjects, a well-developed social studies vocabulary, and a strong command of metacognitive strategies naturally tend to do better than students who come to school without the benefit of a rich prior knowledge and experience base. Social studies teachers should build in time for these students to have numerous opportunities to practice and apply the strategies and to receive corrective coaching and feedback.

Wherever possible, teachers should plan differentiated instruction so that those students who are proficient can read on their own or engage in activities to extend their learning while others are receiving strategy instruction. Explicit strategy instruction might be detrimental to those who already use these strategies or others like them.

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Section 5

Reading Strategies

Strategies for the Three Phases of Cognitive Processing		Preactive Preparation Before Reading	Interactive Assistance During Reading	Reflective Reflection After Reading
Vocabulary Development	Page Number			
SS-1 Concept Definition Mapping	78	x	x	x
SS-2 Five-Step Method	81	x	x	x
SS-3 Frayer Model	84	x	x	x
SS-4 Semantic Feature Analysis	87	x	x	x
SS-5 Semantic Mapping	90	x	x	x
SS-6 Student VOC Strategy	93	x	x	
SS-7 Verbal and Visual Word Association	97	x	x	x
SS-8 Word Sorts	100	x	x	x
SS-9 Zooming in and Zooming Out	103	x	x	x
Narrative Text				
SS-10 History Frame	105		x	x
SS-11 Venn Diagram	108	x	x	x
Informational Text				
SS-12 Anticipation Guide/Revised Extended/Reaction Guide	110	x	x	x
SS-13 Directed Reading/Thinking Activity (DR/TA)	115	x	x	x
SS-14 Graphic Organizer	119	x	x	x
SS-15 Group Summarizing	122			x
SS-16 Historical Character Map	124		x	x
SS-17 What I Know; Want to Learn; Learned (K-W-L)	126	x		x
SS-18 Pairs Read	129		x	
SS-19 Predict-Locate-Add-Note (PLAN)	130	x	x	x
SS-20 Problematic Situation	135	x		x
SS-21 Proposition/Support Outline	137		x	x
SS-22 Sensory Imagery	140		x	
SS-23 Structured Note Taking	142	x	x	x
SS-24 Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review (SQ3R)	145	x	x	x
SS-25 Think-Aloud	148		x	
Reflection Strategies (Questioning; Writing; Discussing)				
SS-26 Learning Log	150	x	x	x
SS-27 Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)	152			x
SS-28 Questioning the Author (QtA)	155		x	x
SS-29 Role/Audience/Format/Topic (RAFT)	158			x
SS-30 Creative Debate	161			x
SS-31 Discussion Web	163			x
SS-32 Scored Discussion	166			x

SS-5. Semantic Mapping

What is it?

A semantic map is a visual tool that helps readers activate and draw on prior knowledge, recognize important components of different concepts, and see the relationships among these components.

How could it be used in social studies instruction?

This strategy can be incorporated to help students make connections to their prior knowledge at the beginning of a lesson and used throughout a social studies unit to help them refine and deepen their understanding. Students will be able to visualize how terms are connected and/or related. This strategy can be used to build connections between concepts.

How to use it:

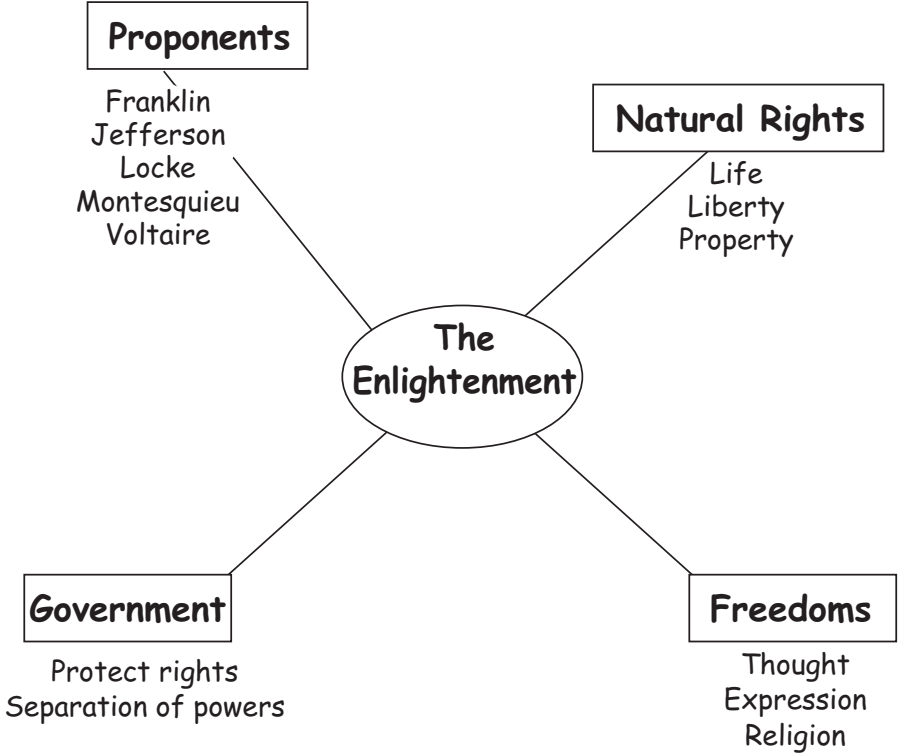
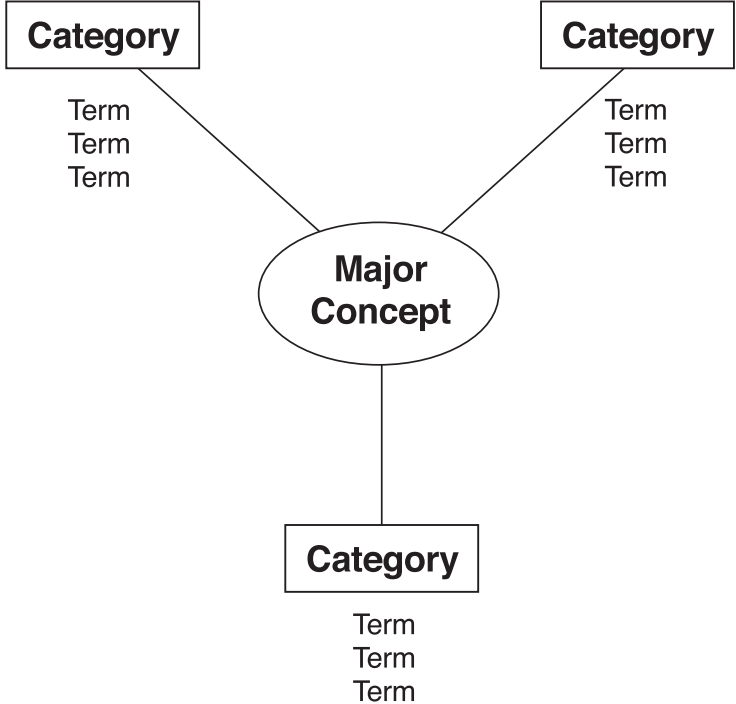
1. Write the major concept of the lesson or unit on chart paper.
2. Instruct students to brainstorm a list of terms that relate in some way to the major concept.
3. Write the major concept in the center of another sheet of chart paper and circle it.
4. Encourage students to review the brainstormed list and begin to categorize the terms. The categories and terms should be discussed and then displayed in the form of a map or web.
5. Leave the chart up throughout the lesson or unit so that new categories and terms can be added as needed.

See also the *TRCA Teacher's Manual, 2nd Ed.*, pp. 82–84.

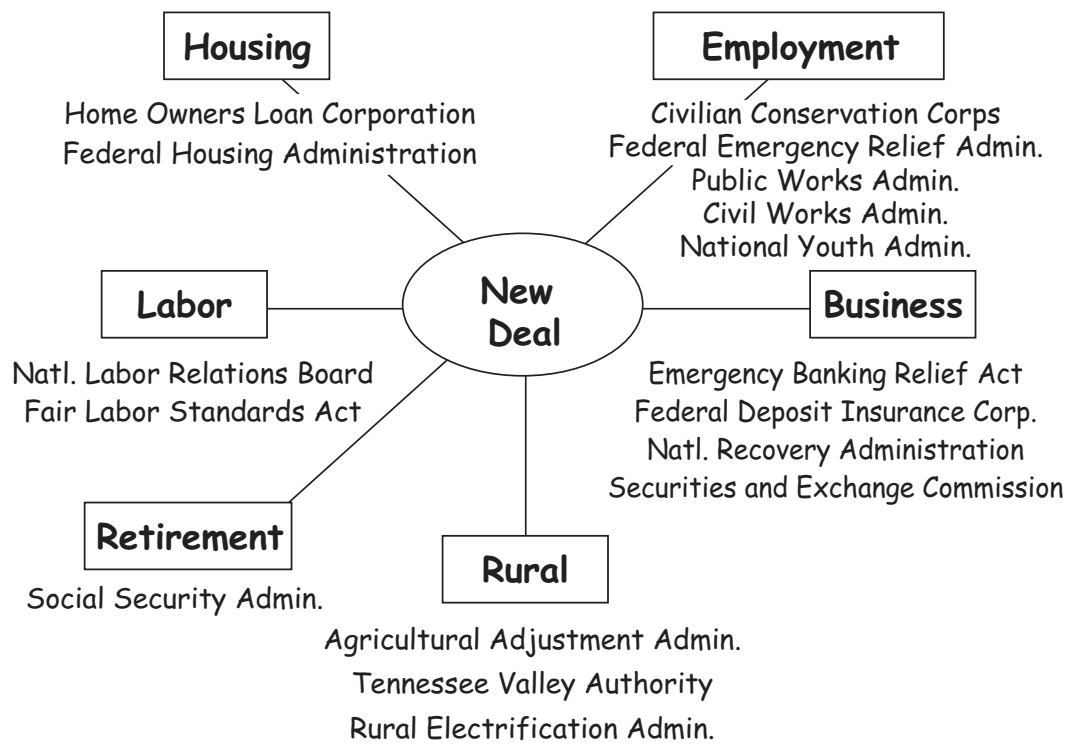
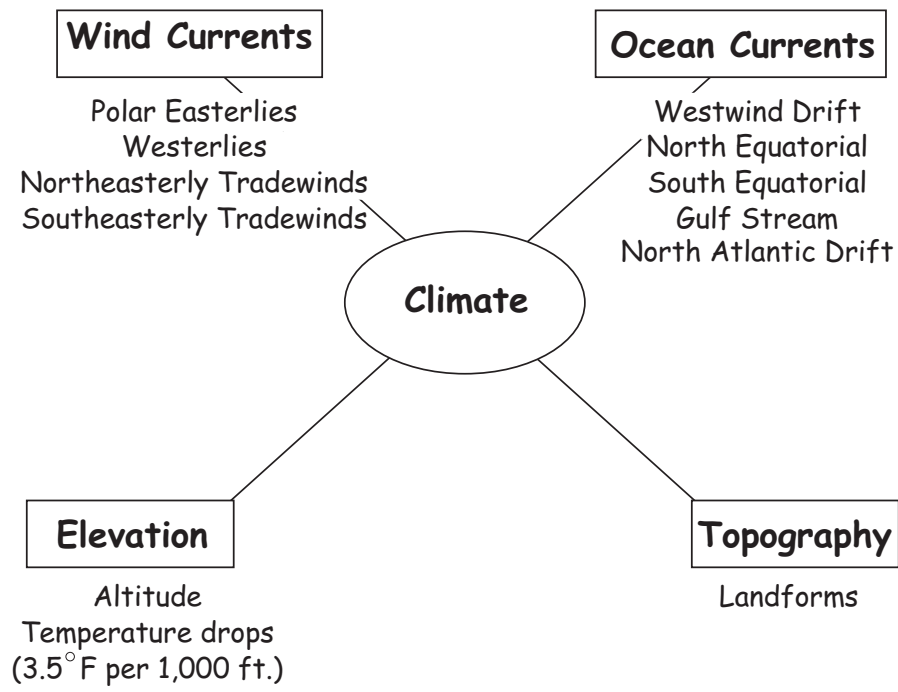
Vocabulary Development

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Semantic Map



Vocabulary Development



SS-18. Pairs Read

What is it?

Pairs read is a strategy that requires collaborative learning as students read and digest text. Students help each other increase their knowledge and understanding of the text by reading the text aloud to each other. While one student reads, the other student listens and then summarizes the main ideas.

How could it be used in social studies instruction?

This strategy provides students with structured opportunities to read and discuss information from a variety of texts, such as articles, primary sources, and essays, on the same topic. Students read information in pairs and then share what they have learned about the topic with the rest of the class.

How to use it:

1. Select a passage for students to read.
2. Arrange students in pairs with one designated as the coach and the other as the reader.
3. Ask the reader to read the first paragraph to the coach.
4. Then ask the coach to summarize the main idea and supporting details. The coach can ask the reader questions to help clarify the reading.
5. Instruct students to reverse roles and ask the new reader to read the next paragraph.
6. Ask the new coach to summarize what was read.
7. Instruct students to continue alternating roles until they have completed the passage.
8. Once the entire passage is read, ask students to cooperatively summarize the main idea and discuss the supporting details.

See also the *TRCA Teacher's Manual, 2nd Ed.*, pp. 119–120.

SS-32. Scored Discussion

What is it?

Scored discussion gives students the opportunity to practice and to evaluate effective discussion skills. A small group of students carry on a content-related discussion after they have read a selection. The teacher and the rest of the class observe and score individual contributions based on predetermined criteria. Students are awarded points for contributing relevant information, using evidence, asking clarifying questions, creating analogies, and encouraging other group members to participate. Negative points are assigned for interruptions, irrelevant comments, and personal attacks. Following the discussion, the teacher and observers provide feedback to discussion members.

How could it be used in social studies instruction?

This strategy provides students with the structure and support to intelligently participate in public discourse and debate. It fosters the skills students will need to be participating members of a democratic society.

How to use it:

1. Determine the criteria for a successful discussion and record it for reference during the discussion. Introduce the discussion score sheet and make modifications if necessary.
2. Ask students to read a selection around which they can have a discussion.
3. Allow enough time for students to organize their thinking and record their arguments and rationale.
4. Select 6–8 students for the small-group discussion. Explain that the rest of the students will observe and score.

Reflection Strategies

5. Teach the strategy.
 - Explain the criteria.
 - Stress appropriateness rather than quantity, and establish time limits.
 - Allow student observation time to demonstrate objectivity.
6. Provide time for discussion and scoring.
7. Repeat this strategy on a regular basis until all students have had the opportunity to be in a discussion group.

See also the *TRCA Teacher's Manual, 2nd Ed.*, p. 164.

Scored Discussion

Effective Participation	Score	Non-effective Participation	Score
1. States his/her opinion on the topic.	0 1 2 3 (4)	1. Off task behavior	(0) 1 2 3 4
2. Make statements that are on topic.	0 1 2 (3) 4	1. Off task behavior	0 (3) 4 5 6
3. Uses data that confirms his/her thinking.	0 2 (3) 4 5	1. Off task behavior	(0) 1 2 3 4
4. Evaluates the merit of others' opinion/data.	(0) 2 3 4 5		
5. Actively listens.	0 3 4 5 (6)		
6. Summarizes own thinking, as well as the opinions of others.	0 4 (5) 6 7		
Total Score – Effective	21	Total Score – Non-effective	3

Effective Score	<u>21</u>
Non-effective Score	<u>-3</u>
Total Score	<u>18</u>

Workshops Available

McREL delivers training and consultation on their series, *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas: If Not Me, then Who?*, *Teaching Reading in Math*, *Teaching Reading in Science* and *Teaching Reading in Social Studies* to teachers, reading specialists, staff developers, and administrators.

The **Teachers Workshop** (designed for upper elementary, middle, and high school educators) provides an overview of content area reading instruction; engages participants in applying vocabulary, reading, and reflection strategies to specific content covered in their classrooms; and offers practical suggestions on integrating these strategies into existing curricula.

The **Training-of-Trainers Workshop** is designed for educators who have a background in reading or who have completed the Teachers Workshop. Participants delve more deeply into critical conceptual ideas underlying the teaching of content area reading skills; receive guidelines for facilitating adult learning; discuss training issues, questions, and concerns; share and critique training plans for teaching content area reading strategies; and discuss schoolwide implementation planning.

For more information about scheduling workshops and consulting services, contact McREL at 303.337.0990.