

Book Study

Prepared by the
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Project

I Read It, But I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers

Cris Tovani
(Stenhouse, 2000)

Book Description

I Read It, but I Don't Get It is an insightful, practical guide into your students' minds. From here, Tovani takes you into the theory behind the most strategic thinking strategies and leaves you with practical tips to employing these strategies in your classroom. Tovani presents her information in an anecdotal, easy to read style targeting the variety of students you find in your classroom. She provides the information to take these strategies straight to your classroom and implement them with ease.

Target Audience

Chapter 1: Fake Reading**Overview**

Tovani doesn't waste any time getting to the soul of students. She relays the feelings and strategies of her students and of herself as a struggling reader. Tovani is quick to dispel the myth that fluent reading equals comprehension.

Helpful Hints

While reading this chapter, think about how you would have these candid conversations with your students.

1. Make a chart of the traits of effective and ineffective readers. Which traits do we reinforce in the classroom and how?
2. What is fake reading? Discuss the possibilities for students to fake read in your class.
3. Tovani is successful at getting her students to open up to her right from the beginning. How does she do this? Why is this so important?

Chapter 2: The Realities of Reading

Overview

In this chapter, Tovani characterizes two different kinds of struggling readers: resistive readers and word callers. She then dives into the research and theory behind teaching strategic thinking while reading.

Helpful Hints

As you read this chapter, try to empathize with your students by thinking about the kind of reader you were at different times in your past. Or, think about how you read various types of text from a novel, to the newspaper, to legal documents, to governmental documents such as and IRS form.

1. Discuss the danger in feeding students enough information to get by without reading. What are the short term and long term benefits and hazards for the reader?
2. Take some time to discuss who your word callers might be? Why are these students specifically in big danger?
3. Discuss Tovani's opinion about prescriptive reading programs.
4. What is the K-12 reading instruction that takes place in your district? Is it comprehensive and complete or is there a point of breakdown?

Chapter 3: Purposes for Reading: Access Tools

Overview

This chapter introduced the first reading strategy, setting a purpose. Tovani models how she introduces this to her students. In this chapter, she introduces the teaching strategies of thinking aloud, marking the text, and double-entry diaries, comprehension constructors and modeling.

Helpful Hints

While reading, think about your current use of each of the teaching strategies.

Discussion Questions

1. Have a discussion that highlights the wide variety of reading you do every day and how the purposes of that reading vary. How does the purpose affect how you read?
2. Thinking aloud is an important component of reading instruction. Talk about your experience and comfort level with this strategy. What kind of preparation would be necessary to make this strategy successful?
3. Create a guide to help differentiate marking the text, double-entry diaries, and comprehension constructors. Identify to the purpose of each strategy and the best times in instruction to implement them.

Chapter 4: Conversations with Cantos: Tracking Confusion to Its Source

Overview

Chapter 4 introduces the notion of readers monitoring their reading. This is about students understanding their own thinking and recognizing when they are confused. Tovani first describes how a reader knows if he or she is confused, then she describes the voices to listen to in a reader's head.

Helpful Hint

As you read this chapter, think about what your students tell you about the reading assignments they complete for class. Think about the teaching moment you could have with them with the information you gain in this chapter.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how you could teach the six signals students should look for to identify confusion.
2. Discuss the voices in your head as you read. This can be difficult to monitor for an accomplished reader. You may want to have a fairly difficult piece of text on hand to practice noticing what those voices are saying to help you comprehend.
3. Create a list of ways we could teach readers to monitor their thinking. Which ones would you implement, why or why not? Be sure to keep in mind the various levels of students in your classroom.

Chapter 5: Fix It!

Overview

Now that students are listening to voices and notice when they don't comprehend, Tovani provides us with multiple fix-up strategies they can employ to help them make sense of the text.

Helpful Hints

As you read, keep in mind, those student who come into class chiming, "I read it, but I don't remember it."

Discussion Questions

1. Tovani lists nine strategies to fix comprehension. Take some time to discuss these, how to teach them, and what supports your students may need in remembering to use them.
2. How could you use these strategies to meet the variety of needs in your content area or Tier 1 classroom?

Chapter 6: Connecting the New to the Known

Overview

In chapter 6, Tovani introduces the importance of background knowledge and the importance in students identifying it and connecting new information to it.

Helpful Hints

As Tovani illustrates getting her students to make connections, take note of the instructional strategies she employs in doing so.

Discussion Questions

1. Some of our students are very good accessing background knowledge and others simply seem as if they haven't had any life experience or schooling, despite what we know. Discuss ways to help these struggling students connect their life experiences and what they are learning in all of their classes.
2. Making connections can have huge benefits in reading, but as Tovani states, some students will make very basic connections. What are some ways we can help these students dive a little deeper?
3. Can prior knowledge affect a student's score on a universal screener or progress monitor? Explain.

Chapter 7: What Do You Wonder?

Overview

Chapter 7 introduces the strategy of asking questions while reading. Tovani encourages teachers to make time and transfer the power to the students, let them be curious, let them ask. As secondary students are often hesitant to ask questions and seem to have all curiosity squashed out them, Tovani provides a simple activity to begin that dialogue.

Helpful Hints

Before you read, do a survey in your head about how often you ask your students to generate questions. Think about the kinds of questions you get, are you satisfied with them? What have you done to ensure good questioning? What is your reaction when you have a student pose a really thought provoking question?

Discussion Questions

1. On page 93, Tovani states, “Teachers have a choice. We can choose to cover the curriculum or we can teach our students to inquire.” Discuss this statement. Is it really a choice we can make or is made for us? Do we have to choose between the two?
2. Discuss the pros and cons of leading an inquiry based classroom. (Be cautious in making assumptions in anticipating results of instruction).
3. Discuss how you could create an environment of inquiry in your classroom.
4. How would you teach and scaffold questioning for the struggling student?

Chapter 8: Outlandish Responses: Taking Inferences Too Far**Overview**

In this chapter Tovani provides tools for dealing with students whose responses are quite out of what we would expect. She defines what an inference is and suggests ways for students to practice making inferences.

Helpful Hints

Think about those students who always remind you it is an opinion question so they can't be wrong.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the difference between telling a student to infer and showing a student how to infer.
2. On page 102, Tovani states, "Sometimes we ask our students to be proficient at a task before they have had any practice." Discuss when this happens, why, and what needs to be done to remedy it. Also consider which level of students this affects the most.
3. Take some time to talk about how setting a purpose, visualizing, making connections, asking questions, and making inferences all interact to assist in comprehension.

Chapter 9: What's the Plan?

Overview

The final chapter sums up the big ideas of teaching reading and reminds the readers how complex comprehension is. Tovani provides two examples of how she intertwines reading with content classes.

Helpful Hints

As you read, be thinking about how you will organize your reading instruction.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the roles of the reading teacher and of the content teachers in teaching reading. Who is responsible for what? (Refer to the MTSS model as you discuss current roles and how those roles may shift in our building.)
2. Discuss the importance of content reading for struggling learners.
3. Don't forget our students on the upper end of the spectrum. What kinds of reading instruction might they need?
4. Comprehension instruction is messy. Discuss how you can handle some of the messiness. For example:
 - a. Students reading different styles of texts
 - b. The overlapping nature of reading strategies
 - c. Instruction on the level of the individual student