**Paraphrasing for Reading Comprehension**

**Why Is This Strategy Useful?**

Paraphrasing is a research-based instruction strategy that increases students’ reading comprehension skills. Most reading instruction in schools focuses on foundational reading skills, such as development of the ability to associate sounds with letters and use these sounds to form words (alphabetic principle) and phonological awareness. Such strategies assume that students’ reading comprehension will naturally evolve from these foundational skills. However, research shows otherwise. Teacher strategies that explicitly target reading comprehension, such as paraphrasing instruction, are thus imperative. The practical strategy of paraphrasing can be easily implemented in any general education classroom and is particularly useful with students who are struggling readers.

**Description of Strategy**

RAP is a mnemonic strategy to teach the strategy of paraphrasing. It is a three-step strategy, which is decoded as follows:

- **Read a paragraph.**
- **Ask myself, “What was the main idea and two details?”**
- **Put it into my own words.**

The RAP strategy is based on a theory that identifies paraphrasing as a key skill to help improve students’ memory of main ideas and details in text. The basic procedure is accompanied by a worksheet and is implemented using the following steps.

- The teacher gives students a short text to read aloud.
- The teacher then asks them to identify the main idea and details in the paragraph.
- As the students identify each element, the instructor should write their responses in the appropriate section of the corresponding worksheet.
- The worksheet prompts students to identify what the paragraph was about and what additional information was included in the paragraph.
- The students are given a graphic organizer with the steps of the RAP strategy clearly printed as a way to assist them in remembering the steps of the strategy and the parts they needed to identify in each paragraph.
- The strategy works especially well if taught with a simple, systematic, and stepwise process that incorporates self-monitoring (i.e., self-regulation) and goal setting.

**Research Evidence**

At least one quasi-experimental research study supports the use of the paraphrasing strategy. In this study, three struggling readers in a Midwestern sixth-grade classroom received RAP instruction. Students participating in the study were asked to read social studies passages aloud. Students were told that they could take as much time as they needed and that their oral reading was not timed. After reading the passage, the passage was removed; students were asked to retell whatever they could remember from the passage. Next, students were asked to
answer six questions directly related to each passage. After receiving RAP training, students were tested on the percentage of text recalled and how well they understood the important information in the text. The struggling readers dramatically increased their recall of text in content areas with the RAP paraphrasing intervention, as compared to baseline results. These findings suggest that the RAP strategy could be a practical and beneficial intervention for classroom teachers.

**Sample Studies Supporting This Strategy**


See: [http://rse.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/29/4/222](http://rse.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/29/4/222)

Reading is an important component of academic success and a skill required for many adult responsibilities. Many strategies exist that claim to increase reading comprehension. However, in contrast to research on foundational reading skills (e.g., vocabulary, fluency, decoding), relatively little research has been done on reading comprehension strategies. This study investigated the use of self-regulated strategy development paired with the “RAP” paraphrasing strategy as a way to increase reading comprehension. Participants were three sixth-grade students from a Midwestern state. Results indicate that use of the RAP paraphrasing strategy increased reading comprehension.

**Additional Resources**


Paraphrasing Activity: [http://www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/pet/read_write/aboutthepaper/paraphrasing.htm](http://www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/pet/read_write/aboutthepaper/paraphrasing.htm)

Reading Comprehension Strategy. Available at: [http://www.k12.nf.ca/fatima/rcomp1.htm](http://www.k12.nf.ca/fatima/rcomp1.htm).