

Comprehension: A Classroom Illustration

Our first grade teacher, Ms. Chang, begins her instructional planning with CCSS Anchor standard 4 – individual reading standard 10 - selecting an appropriately challenging and complex text as shown in the Instructional Framework in Table 1.1. It is the winter of the academic year and Ms. Chang has been teaching this group of first-grade students for nearly six months. The last text read in her first-grade classroom was selected from the literature genre – *Curious George Goes to a Chocolate Factory* (Rey, 1998) Consequently, she selects the next text from the informational text genre to balance her students' exposure to literature and informational text. She looks for an informational text that relates to the topic or theme of the last book they had read, **chocolate**, a tasty topic to be sure! After searching in her school central book room, she locates an informational text by R. Nelson (2003) titled, *From Cocoa Bean to Chocolate*.

To determine if the text tentatively selected is appropriately challenging, she searches the Lexile.com website for the title, *From Cocoa Bean to Chocolate*, to determine its quantitative level of text difficulty. She finds it to be a Lexile Level of 330, at the upper end of the end-of-year Lexile Level stretch band-width of 450.

Ms. Chang recalls how much the children in her classroom enjoyed reading about chocolate and concludes that they will likely find a new text on the same theme or topic just as engaging. Next, she reads the text carefully and closely to find potential qualitative comprehension supports or obstacles to be faced by her first grade students when they read this text. The supports/obstacles include: use of a glossary to locate meanings for bolded words; infrequent use of signal words to cue connections among ideas or text structure, inclusion of a very few text features (bolded heading) but no numbering of

steps in a sequence or illustrations or graphics that show the entire process of going from a cocoa bean to chocolate.

Constructing Microstructure to Form a Textbase

After selecting the *From Cocoa Bean to Chocolate* text, she carefully reads the text again to plan her selection of multiple CCSS standards and multiple sets of comprehension strategies to be taught at multiple levels of text comprehension processing. During the first reading of the informational text, *From Cocoa Bean to Chocolate*, Ms. Chang remembers that she wants to help her students construct a *microstructure* of the text as represented in the CI text comprehension model. To accomplish this aim, she starts with CCSS anchor standard 1, *key ideas and details*, and selects individual reading standard 2. Standard 2 requires that students be able to identify the main topic and be able to retell key details from the text.

Thus, to support her teaching of CCSS individual reading standard 2, Ms. Chang selects an evidence-based set of two comprehension strategies appropriate for this initial level of text processing – *microstructure construction*: paraphrasing and retelling. Before she begins teaching the text, she reminds her students to activate their background knowledge about chocolate and to also remember what they learned about chocolate from reading their last story – *Curious George Goes to the Chocolate Factory*.

Ms. Chang begins her instruction by reading aloud the first two pages of the text. As she reads aloud, she thinks aloud about how she identifies the key idea. As she thinks aloud, she notes how each sentence is telling about something. She reads and thinks about what each sentence tells about - how farmers plant cocoa bean plants, pods grow on the plants, and seeds grow in the pods. She says to her students, “It seems like all of these

sentences are telling me about how cocoa beans grow.” She then thinks aloud and tells her students that thinking about what all of the sentences tell about is one way to identify the key idea in a text. After reading these two pages aloud, Ms. Chang uses paraphrase and retelling to connect what she has learned from the text so far. The process of modeling identification of the key idea and retelling the key ideas and details in the text by using her own words, or paraphrasing, is guided and gradually released to the students in the subsequent pages of reading the text, *From Cocoa Bean to Chocolate*.

Constructing Macrostructure to Form a Textbase

In the next part of the lesson, Ms. Chang focuses her instruction on helping her students *construct a macrostructure* of the text as indicated in the second level of the CI text comprehension model by selecting individual standard 5 - *know and use various text features to locate various facts* - from within CCSS anchor standard 2, *craft and structure*. To support her teaching of CCSS individual reading standard 5, Ms. Chang selects an evidence-based set of two comprehension strategies appropriate for this next level of text processing: text features (bolding and glossary) and close reading.

She starts by pointing out bolded words in the text using her computer projector and a document camera so that her students are looking at what she is talking about and understands the term “bolded text”. She points out that the author has provided in the text several bolded headings. She tells her students that authors often use bolded headings for paragraphs or sections to help readers focus on the key idea(s). She reads the sentences that follow the bolded heading. She points out through her thinking aloud that sentences containing details about the key idea are often signaled by the author through the use of bolded headings. She reads two more bolded headings in the text and

asks students to paraphrase what they think the sentences following the bolded heading will tell about or the key idea.

Next, Ms. Chang notes that there are other bolded words in the sentences of the text. She models how when she sees a bolded word in an informational text that she then turns to the glossary in the back of the book to look up the meaning of the bolded word to help her better understand the meaning of the words bolded in the text. As the students and Ms. Chang close read the text together, she gradually releases the task of noting bolded words in the sentences of the text and looking them up in the glossary to her students.

Integration to Form a Situation Model

In the last segment of this CI Model informed comprehension lesson, Ms. Chang focuses instruction on helping her first-grade students integrate the textbase information they have constructed in the two previous levels of comprehension instruction with their background knowledge to create a situation model of the text. To do this, she selects individual reading standard 7, *use illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas*, from within anchor standard 3, *integration of knowledge and ideas*. To support her teaching of CCSS individual reading standard 7, Ms. Chang selects an evidence-based set of two comprehension strategies appropriate for this next level of text processing: visual imagery/illustrations and close reading.

Ms. Chang begins this last segment of the lesson by reading aloud details from the text and thinking aloud for her students about how the illustrations in the text helped her to make sense of the text. She models how when she read a detail from the text, *hard pods grow on each tree*, and used the photograph in the text of a cocoa tree illustrating

many big brown pods to help her to create a visual image and an understanding of what a pod of cocoa beans looked like. As they re-read the text together, Ms. Chang gradually releases responsibility to her students for describing how illustrations help them to understand text details.

To wrap up the lesson, Ms. Chang selects any other reading standard she feels would help her students comprehend the text. She selects individual Reading Standard 3: *Describe connection between two individuals, events, ideas or pieces of information in a text.* She then asks her students to help her insert numerical, ordinal words into the text to highlight the sequential/process of making chocolate from cocoa beans. Once these words have been inserted, Ms. Chang helps her students complete a graphic organizer illustrating the process described in this informational text – the sequence of events that occur in making a cocoa bean into chocolate! This helps students take the situation model of this text and actively organize the process or sequence and integrate it into their world knowledge networks as described as a final step in the CI Model of Text Comprehension (Kintsch, 2013). If done well, Ms. Chang’s students will have stronger sense of sequential texts that they can employ in other readings and in their writing of comparable genres. When teachers help their students read a text using the multi-leveled processes represented in the CI text comprehension model, they will develop over time into much better readers in general and highly proficient comprehenders of text.

The remainder of this book is intended to help primary-grade classroom teachers put their theoretical knowledge of the CI Model of Text Comprehension into practice. Subsequent chapters illustrate how to use the CI Model to plan effective CCSS reading standards-based comprehension instruction for young readers, including those who

struggle. Extended examples, using both literature and informational texts, of how to select CCSS anchor and individual speaking, listening, and reading standards will be coupled with how to select and teach sets of evidence-based comprehension strategies at multiple levels of text processing described in the CI Model. In the final chapter, we describe how teachers can design and use formative assessments to assess their students' levels of text comprehension processing and their mastery of the CCSS reading anchor and individual reading standards. We also describe how to use assessment outcomes to adapt and modify comprehension lessons to provide extended support for students who struggle with the demands of early comprehension instruction.