



Friday Focus

Carter County Schools

FALL HAPPENINGS

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OCTOBER 30, 2015

- Nov 2 Teacher Planning Day
- Nov 3 Election Day—No School
- Nov 16 3-5 Academy
- Nov 16 East End Academy
- Nov 18 West End Academy

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Teaching Students to Be Close Readers

What is close reading? Essentially, it means reading to uncover layers of meaning that lead to deep comprehension. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) supplies clarification useful for teaching with Common Core standards in mind: **Close, analytic reading stresses engaging with a text of sufficient complexity directly and examining meaning thoroughly and methodically, encouraging students to read and reread deliberately. Directing student attention on the text itself empowers students to understand the central ideas and key supporting details. It also enables students to reflect on the meanings of individual words and sentences; the order in which sentences unfold; and the development of ideas over the course of the text, which ultimately leads students to arrive at an understanding of the text as a whole.** (PARCC, 2011, p. 7)

The following five strategies are a few more ways you can expand your toolbox of close reading techniques.

1. Number the paragraphs

The Common Core asks students to be able to cite and refer to the text. One simple way to do this is by numbering each paragraph, section, or stanza in the left hand margin. When students refer to the text, require them to state which paragraph they are referring to.

2. Chunk the text.

When faced with a full page of text, reading can quickly become overwhelming. Breaking up the text into smaller sections (or chunks) makes the page more manageable. Students do this by drawing a horizontal line between paragraphs to divide

the page into smaller sections. Have students do this in a meaningful way. For example, the first chunk might include the hook and thesis statement. The next 3 paragraphs might be the middle supporting ideas.

3. Underline and circle... with a purpose.

Telling students to simply underline “the important stuff” is too vague. “Stuff” is not a concrete thing that students can identify. Instead, direct students to underline and circle very specific things. Think about what information you want students to take from the text, and ask them to look for those elements. What you have students circle and underline may change depending on the text type.

4. Left margin: What is the author SAYING?

It isn’t enough to ask students to “write in the margins”. We must be very specific and give students a game plan for what they will write. This is where the chunking comes into play. In the left margin, ask students to summarize each chunk. You can teach them to summarize in 10 words or less.

5. Right margin: Dig deeper into the text

In the right-hand margin, direct students to complete a specific task for each chunk. This may include: 1. Use a power verb to describe what the author is DOING. (For example: Describing, illustrating, arguing, etc.) 2. Represent the information with a picture. This is a good way for students to be creative to visually represent the chunk with a drawing. 3. Ask questions. This might be a struggle for many students, as they often say they don’t have any questions to ask. When modeled, students can begin to learn how to ask questions that dig deeper into the text.

Some Questions Readers Might Pose

Close Readers Might Begin by Asking These Questions:

- What does this text want me to know? What information does this text teach?
- What does this text want me to understand? What new ideas and concepts does it suggest?
- What does this text want me to feel? What emotions does it stir up?
- How does it accomplish these tasks?

Close and Critical Readers Might Then Ask These Questions:

- Whose perspective is represented in this text?
- Whose point of view is most fully explored?
- Who is honored or privileged in the text and how? Who is marginalized?
- How does the perspective in this text compare with others on this issue?
- How does the author use persuasive techniques, literary devices, or writerly craft to convey meaning?