

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Teaching Online Reading Comprehension **Donald J. Leu**



“Online reading comprehension requires new reading skills.”

Did you know that online reading comprehension requires new reading skills beyond those required for traditional offline reading comprehension? In fact, some of your lowest performing offline readers may actually be some of your best online readers (Leu, et al., 2007).

These new reading skills are often called new literacies. Mastery of these skills is essential to becoming fully prepared for the 21st century. Internet Workshop is a great vehicle to teach the new literacies of online reading comprehension.

What Are the New Literacies of Online Reading Comprehension?

The new literacies of online reading comprehension require distinctive reading skills (Leu, et. al., 2007) in these areas:

Generating Important Questions We read online to find out the answer to a question. How can I become better at basketball? What is my favorite band doing now? When you are reading online, it is important to know how to ask good questions and how to refine your questions as you gather additional information.

Locating Information Once you have a question, you need to locate information online. Knowing how to use a search engine and infer meaning from the results page requires new reading skills. In fact, if you cannot locate information, you cannot read on the Internet.

Critically Evaluating Information After locating information, you need to evaluate it. Knowing how to evaluate the accuracy and validity of information becomes especially important online, where anyone may publish anything.

Synthesizing Information Online, we usually synthesize many, short, separated units of information from multiple sites. This requires additional reading skills. Offline, these units are typically put together for us.

Communicating Information During online reading, we often communicate with others, seeking and sharing information using new tools such as IM, text messaging, wikis, blogs, and email. Each of these tools requires new skills.

Internet Workshop

Internet Workshop teaches these new literacies of online reading comprehension. It has three steps.

Develop an Information Challenge Activity. You first develop a question or a problem for students: Where does Lois Lowry get the

ideas for her novels? or, What themes typically appear in Gary Paulsen's writing? Why?

Have Students Complete the Research Activity. During the week, students can use the computer lab at school or work at home to investigate your question. Have them record the answer and bring it to class at the end of the week.

Conduct a Workshop Session During a workshop session, have students share their answers and the online reading comprehension strategies used to complete the assignment. Post a running list of these effective online reading strategies.

Internet Workshop on Authors

I develop an Internet Workshop around each important, upcoming author and use it to conduct an author talk. Students do research about the author and exchange it in class. During the process, students also learn important online reading comprehension strategies, which they share with others.

Develop an Information Challenge Activity. One week before we read a selection from a new author, I provide students with an information challenge similar to this one:

Locate information on the Internet about Katherine Patterson. Find out all you can about this important author. Locate answers to these and other questions:

- *What was her childhood like? How did it influence her work?*
- *What topics does she often write about?*
- *What themes appear in her work?*

Find out everything! Record this information in your Internet Workbook. Be prepared to share everything that you discovered. Also, write down the most important reading strategies that you used so you can teach us what worked for you.

(An Internet Workbook is a spiral-bound notebook where information is recorded and evaluated with comments following each online reading assignment. Alternatively, a blog can be used by each student for these assignments.)

Have Students Complete the Research Activity. Allow students to complete the assignment at the school's computer lab or at home.

Conduct a Workshop Session During this session, students do two things: 1) share their answers and 2) explain how they figured out each one. They discuss online reading strategies while offering their explanations. If students forget, ask them, "How did you figure that out?" Answering this prompt requires students to share the online reading strategies that proved most effective.

Modeled Strategy

See pp. 573 and 587 for point-of-use notes modeling these strategies.

Teacher Resources

- *Professional Development Guidebook*
- *Classroom Strategies and Teaching Routines* cards

PHLit
Online!

Log on as a teacher at www.PHLitOnline.com to access a library of all Professional Development articles by the Contributing Authors of Pearson Prentice Hall *Literature*.



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Supporting Research

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