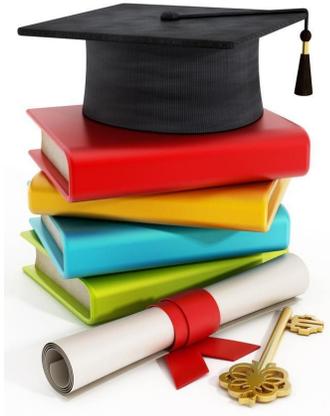


Reading Strategy of the Month: Checking for Understanding

By Joyce Jennings



Grounded in the position that the purpose of reading is understanding the author's message, the Checking for Understanding strategy as described by Gail Boushey is the foundational strategy for the Two Sisters' *The CAFÉ Book*.

Introduce the strategy with a read-aloud. Remind students that authors write books because they want to teach us something or tell us a story. As we read, it is important for us to stop frequently to make sure we are understanding what we are reading. Explain to your students that you will be stopping as you read to talk about your understanding of the text.

As you read, stop after the first few pages and tell your students that you need to stop to make sure you are understanding the author's message. Continue to stop throughout the book, modeling checking for understanding as you read. For younger students, you will need to make frequent stops; for older students, you may begin with frequent stops and increase the amount of text read between stops as you progress through the book.

Remember to model lack of understanding and misunderstanding, as well as, accurate understanding as you are checking for understanding. This gives you the opportunity to model fix-up strategies that will be added to your students' strategies repertoire.

For your first text, Boushey recommends a picture book with a strong story line and beautiful illustrations. However, in subsequent read-alouds, you should model the strategy using texts that match those your students will encounter, including chapter books and informational texts.

After your introductory lesson, ask the students to identify the strategy you modeled. Post the name of the strategy and a brief description on your strategy board. In later lessons, make sure to refer to the posting as you model the strategy.

Boushey, G. & Moser, J. (2009). *The CAFÉ Book: Engaging All Students in Daily Literacy Assessment and Instruction*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.