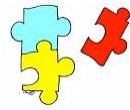




Pathways for Parents

Helping Your Child Succeed in School



By Mary Giovanazzi
Winter 2010

Home & School

The last issue of *Pathways* focused on identifying similarities and differences as a strategy to help students learn. This issue will focus on the strategies of summarizing and note taking to improve student learning. Teaching students to utilize these strategies can be challenging, but research proves that student comprehension greatly improves with their use.



Summarizing and Note Taking

Typically, when we think about summarizing, we think about the end of something: the end of a chapter, the end of a speech, or the end of the year (think about those end of the year television news stories that show the year in highlights). However, summarizing is not an easy thing for children to learn to do.

Teachers spend a great deal of time teaching students how to effectively summarize. Why? Summarizing gives children the big picture. When students summarize while reading, it helps them monitor their thinking. It tells them whether or not they understand. Summarizing helps students organize information into categories and ideas that fit together (think of the strategy of identifying similarities and differences). It is a way for students to synthesize information and make it clear. When someone says, "Give me the gist of the report" or "Give me the bottom line," they are asking for a summary of key ideas into one's own words.

Note taking is a related strategy to summarizing. It supports student learning of new information. Students who can take notes effectively (by summarizing key ideas in their own words) are much more likely to retain what they've learned. Notes are also useful tools for learning. Notes can be used to prepare for an exam, prepare a research paper or project or complete other types of assessments. Usually, students begin learning how to take notes in 4th or 5th grade. Developing summarizing skills is the important first step to developing note-taking skills.





In the Classroom, It May Look Like.....

Modeling the “thinking” students must do when they summarize.

Modeling and practicing how to determine the theme, main ideas and major supports for that idea.

Using strategies such as GIST in which (after reading) students write a sentence or two that captures the “gist” of the selection.

Using various graphic organizers to assist students in the summary process.

- Exit Slips
- ABC Reviews
- Summary Frames
- 3.2.1. Organizers

Examining samples of summaries to evaluate their quality.

Using lessons that teach the structure of the information in text.

- Question – Answer
- Cause – Effect
- Problem – Solution

Providing students with teacher prepared notes (or direct instruction in taking notes) using linguistic and non linguistic forms.

- Idea Webs
- Sketches
- Outlines

Providing opportunities to review notes on a regular basis.

At Home, It May Look Like....



Watching a TV program or movie then asking your child to tell you in a couple of sentences what it was about. You can do this with newspaper articles and comic strips too!

Reading informational texts with your child and stopping occasionally to ask your child to put the information in his or her own words.

Asking your child to tell you the GIST of everyday tasks such as baking cookies or playing a game.

Reading the summary (if provided) in nonfiction books before reading the actual text.

Letting your child help with a family scrapbook or photo album, selecting “key” pictures, postcards and other artifacts that represent family vacations, holidays, or other events. They can also write (or dictate) a single statement to summarize the event.

Thinking aloud. Let your child hear your summaries of events or activities.

Assisting your child with preparing for tests or other assessments by recording & reviewing key ideas.

Keeping note-taking tools handy in the house (index cards, binders, files/dividers organizing notes into categories).

Reviewing notes for school subjects on a regular basis.