

What a Gem! The Unique Approach to the Daily Lessons in Making Meaning

Categories: Making Meaning, Teaching Tips, Implementation

Last school year, you might remember that I challenged you to find the content, assessment and technology features gems in Making Meaning. I share about the Resource Sheet for IDR Conferences, Building a Body of Knowledge: The Animal World and The Power of “Most, Some or Few”. To continue the conversation, I would like to share the gem that is our unique approach to the daily lesson design.

In Making Meaning, the students are taught the reading comprehension strategies that good readers use to make sense of texts. They learn and practice these strategies in the lessons before using them in their independent reading during IDR.

The Unique Unit and Week Design

The unit and week design of Making Meaning is a gem in itself! We are not exploring those in depth except to say that the strategy development and application to reading is approached through a unit, week, and day instructional approach.

To learn more:

- Read about the unit and week overviews in the “Planning and Teaching the Lessons” portion of the “Teaching the Program” section of the Introduction starting on page xxviii.
- Go to your current unit of instruction to review the unit summary paragraph along the unit overview chart.
- Go to your current week of instruction to review the comprehension and social development learning goals for the week.
- Consider the implications to instruction.

The Unique Approach to the Daily Lesson Design

Across each week of instruction, students are provided the opportunity to develop the comprehension strategies through uniquely designed lessons that provide access to instruction to not only introduces the strategy but also builds towards independence.

Read-Aloud Lessons

The students listen to and discuss texts together to enable them to build background knowledge and vocabulary, enjoy a common experience, build community, share ideas, and collaborate to construct meaning. Each week begins with a read-aloud lesson. After the reading, discussion questions check the students’ surface-level understanding of the text in **preparation** for deeper thinking about it on subsequent days of the week.

Strategy Lessons

The strategy is introduced for the week. Typically, the read-aloud text will be reread from Day 1 and the teacher will ask questions that

help students **move beyond** the text's surface meaning to a deeper exploration of it. The teacher will then guide the students to develop their understanding through carefully structured activities.

After the strategy lessons, the students are engaged in lessons in which they practice using the strategy, with **teacher support being reduced gradually** as the students become more comfortable with the strategy.

Guided Strategy Practice Lessons

The students practice using the strategy with a very familiar text (such as an excerpt from the week's read-aloud text), with the teacher facilitating and supporting the students' work by asking focused questions and guiding the discussion.

Independent Strategy Lessons

The students practice using the strategy in **their own independent, appropriately leveled text**. The teacher has the opportunity to monitor the students and provide individual help as needed.

To learn more:

- Read about the types of daily lessons and to “to prepare for . . .” guidance in the “Preparing the Lessons” portion of the “Teaching the Program” section of the Introduction starting on page xxx.
- Revisit the unit overview chart and consider the implications to instruction through the lens of the lesson types.

The Student Response Book, A Gem?

The Student Response Book (SRB) is an instructional resource. This gem, used in grades 1-6, provides excerpts of selected read aloud texts along with activity sheets correlated to lessons that the students use to record their thinking. The SRBs are used during the Strategy or Guided Strategy Lessons to transition the strategy work to the students. It provides a shared eyes on text or a frame for the students to share their thinking as they engage in the strategy work.

To learn more:

- Read the “Student Response Books” portion of the “Teaching the Program” section of the Introduction starting on page xxxiii.
- Go to your current unit of instruction, locate the lessons the SRB is used and determine the considerations to application.

Additional Making Meaning Gems

What additional gems have you identified? My colleague, Jackie Jacobs shared these gems:

- Thoughts About Close Reading
- Close Reading and Making Meaning
- How Can We Extend Discussions About Texts?