
What Does a Reading Apprenticeship Classroom Look Like?

Teachers can use this snapshot of a Reading Apprenticeship classroom as a reflection tool, for lesson planning, and with colleagues for peer observations. It can also serve as a guide for administrators' classroom walk-throughs. Three characteristics of a Reading Apprenticeship classroom are paramount: a focus on comprehension, a climate of collaboration, and an emphasis on student independence.

A Focus on Comprehension

- Reading Apprenticeship is embedded in subject area learning: students develop strategies, identify and use text features, build topic knowledge, and carry out discipline-based activities while reading course-related materials.
- The work of comprehending reading materials takes place in the classroom; the teacher scaffolds the learning and serves as model and guide.
- The work of comprehending is metacognitive; how readers make sense of text is as important as what sense they make of it.

A Climate of Collaboration

- Class members draw on each other's knowledge, serving as resources to make sense of text together.
- Class members respect and value problem-solving processes: classroom norms support risk taking, sharing knowledge and confusion, and working together to solve comprehension problems.
- Grouping arrangements support collaboration and inquiry: students work independently, in pairs, in small groups, and as a class, depending on the task and the text.
- A shared vocabulary to describe reading processes and text features is evident in classroom talk, materials in use, and materials on display.

An Emphasis on Student Independence

- Students are agents in the process of reading and learning: they actively inquire into text meaning, their own and others' reading processes, the utility of particular reading strategies, and their preferences, strengths, and weaknesses as readers.
- Students are expected and supported to read extensively: course-related materials are available on various levels, and accountability systems are in place to ensure that students read large quantities of connected text.
- Over time, students are expected and able to do more reading, make more sophisticated interpretations, and accomplish more work with texts with less support from the teacher during class time.

Other Things to Notice

Reading Apprenticeship classrooms can also be recognized by a number of other classroom characteristics, including how materials and student groupings are used, the types of learning activities students undertake, and the roles of the teacher, students, and classroom talk in the learning environment.

Materials

- What materials are present? How are they being used?
- What kind of work is displayed in the classroom? On the walls? On the board?
- What do these displays indicate about how reading is approached and the role it plays in the class?

Groupings

- How is the classroom arranged?
- What kinds of groupings are students in as they carry out classroom tasks?
- What do these arrangements offer students as learning environments?

Tasks and Activities

- What activities are the teacher and students engaged in?
- What activities seem to be routine in this classroom?
- Who is doing the work of reading and comprehending?

Teaching and Learning Roles

- What roles do the teacher and students play in classroom activities?
- Does the teacher model, guide, and collaborate in comprehension as well as give instructions, assign, and question students?
- Do students pose questions and problems as well as respond to questions about course readings?
- Do all members of the classroom community collaborate in comprehension, share their knowledge and experience, inquire?

Classroom Talk

- What does the teacher say—to the class, to small groups, to individual students?
- What do the students say—to the teacher, to each other?
- What do the teacher and the class talk about?
- What kind of language is being used?