

## Why Teach Paraphrasing?

### Teaching Students to Monitor Comprehension in the Science Classroom

Paraphrasing defined = a restatement of a text, passage, or work giving the meaning in another form; a restatement of text in another form or other words, often to simplify or clarify meaning.

To understand the benefits of using classroom time to explicitly teach this reading strategy, let's work backwards from the ultimate goals that teachers have for students in the science classroom:

#### Scaffolding goals for students:

Ultimate science learner goal: *Students need to write scientific explanations that include relevant information cited from credible science texts (i.e., background research).* (RST 6-8.1 & WHST 6-8.1)

To do this . . .

*Students need to select relevant details from teacher provided or student selected background readings.* (RST 6-8.1)

To do this . . .

*Students need to read science texts with understanding.* (RST 6-8.2)

To do this . . .

*Students need to monitor their comprehension as they read* (RST 6-8.2)

AND

*Use literacy strategies to repair their own comprehension when it breaks down.* (RST 6-8.2)

Paraphrasing is a way to monitor one's comprehension. If one cannot paraphrase mentally or to another person, one has not adequately understood the text. If a reader is overly reliant on the actual words used by the author when asked to paraphrase, there is no evidence of genuine comprehension. Paraphrasing is both a strategy for the student and an assessment tool for the teacher to assess student comprehension of a text and of science content. If a student stops to paraphrase and cannot, they can re-read the text and try again. If a student still cannot paraphrase a section of text, the teacher does not have evidence that the student understood the text. While the ultimate goal is for students to select and cite specific textual evidence in their written scientific explanations, explicit instruction toward this goal begins with reading rather than writing.

**Paraphrasing as a mental process** -- The student that can paraphrase mentally as a reader IS the student who doesn't plagiarize as a writer!! If you really understand the text, you are able to paraphrase – this needs to happen before a student can meaningfully integrate textual evidence from background research into his/her writing.

### **Guide to Planning a Lesson on Introducing the Paraphrasing Strategy**

1. Choose a text or an excerpt of text that fits in with your current topic of study.
2. Chunk the text into sections based on key ideas.
3. Determine which chunks you will use for your demonstration/ think aloud. Plan and jot down the actual words you will say to students in your think aloud.
4. Determine which chunks you will ask students to use to practice with a partner.

### **Sequence of a Reading Strategy Lesson Using Gradual Release of Responsibility:**

**Demonstration** – Place text on document camera. Show only the part of the text you are working with at a given time. Read aloud the first chunk of text you have selected and think aloud in front of students. Repeat this process for one or two more chunks, taking care not to exceed about 5-7 minutes.

Your learning objective is to teach a specific strategy (e.g., paraphrasing), but you will likely utilize a number of strategies as you think aloud. For instance, you might visualize or pose questions. It is good for students to see this – you need not name each strategy you are using to make sense of the text.

**Partner Practice** – Ask students to try the strategy by thinking aloud to a partner. Students can read a section of text on the document camera or that you have given them a copy of. After reading, students can take turns paraphrasing. Listen in to partners' conversations during this time. Select a few students to share out during the guided practice session.

**Guided Practice** – Invite pre-selected students to share their paraphrasing (have the appropriate chunk of text on the document camera). Allow for student participation in the form of adding on missing parts and asking questions. This is your time to encourage students' attempts at thinking through the text, confirm their thinking that is on target, and clarify misunderstandings about the text.

**Independent Practice** – Invite students to practice paraphrasing mentally to themselves. Students may benefit from frequent guided practice if they struggle with applying this strategy independently.