Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching is an instructional strategy designed to help students engage in orchestrated dialogue so they can grapple with complex text (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). It relies on students constructing meaning through a scaffolded series of steps that requires them to dialogue with one another by asking and answering questions, clarifying and summarizing a portion of the text, and making predictions. Hattie (2009) cites an effect size for reciprocal teaching of 0.74, which is quite high and indicates a strong correlation to student achievement. To put this figure in perspective, an effect size of 0.40 is considered a benchmark "where the effects of innovation enhance achievement in such a way that we can notice real-world differences" (Hattie, 2009, p. 17). As with most of these activities, the targeted text can be print or nonprint. For example, students read written material; listen to a speech, guest speaker, or audio recording; watch a video clip or demonstration of a process; or study a model or artwork.

There are different ways to lead a reciprocal teaching exercise. I'll discuss two scenarios here. Figure 3.5 outlines the first sequence students can follow and use during their dialogues in which they all work in partnerships or small groups. For large groups or the entire class, refer to Figure 3.6. Both situations require a great deal of interaction among students and opportunities to take active speaking roles as they work toward meaning-making. Determine which version is appropriate based on the text students will examine, the number of encounters they have had with the text (i.e., initial or subsequent read), and the differentiated needs of your students. The particular grouping configurations can be differentiated by readiness or interest; use your professional expertise and knowledge to designate appropriate groupings and texts.

Sometimes, it makes sense to begin with a whole-class situation (the second scenario featured in Figure 3.6) and then ask students to work in pairs or small groups once they are more familiar with the text. A combination of situations can also apply. For example, it might be that three pairs of students are able to work on their own while you lead the rest of the class in a choreographed sequence. Later in the year, possibly more pairs or small groups can be accountable to lead their own sessions. Again, making the decision about groupings and implementation of the more suitable reciprocal teaching version are contingent upon your students and the texts.

Although these prescribed sequences seem rather scripted, eventually students should be able to lead a reciprocal teaching scenario without the aid of the articulated steps. However, provide the support outlined in Figures 3.5 or 3.6 until they are ready to engage in a meaningful way without this structure.

To introduce reciprocal teaching, prepare students by modeling the sequence and expectations with a sample text passage. Additionally, if they are unfamiliar with how to question, summarize, clarify, and predict, then lead a formal lesson in which you present the characteristics and examples of each strategy. Hattie (2009) states that "the effects were highest when there was explicit teaching of cognitive strategies before beginning reciprocal teaching dialogue, showing the importance of modeling and practice as well as giving instruction in the use of the strategies close to the time students used them. The explicit teaching of cognitive strategies and deliberative practice with content when using these strategies makes a major difference" (p. 204).

For questioning, teach students how to pose different kinds of queries so they don't rely on literal questions only. Explain and show examples of literal versus inferential questioning. In addition, identify parts of the text that provide good opportunities to ask questions. An effective summary involves just the main idea and key details. Students tend to be too verbose, so model how to write a brief summary that consists of only the most salient information. Clarification is important, especially for students who have difficulty with comprehension. Identify points in the text that might present a problem for students, and model situations in which readers likely get confused and need clarification (e.g., problematic vocabulary, difficult concepts). Finally, don't fall

into the trap of thinking that only narrative text is ripe for making predictions. Indeed, students can predict a subsequent event in history or the way a historical figure might react. Later, they can confirm whether their predictions were correct. Predictions can also be made based on expository text as students anticipate what topics, structure, or text feature (e.g., subheading, diagram) an author will introduce or cover next. For any response that you model, remember to include evidence from the text.

Figure 3.5: Reciprocal Teaching Student Sheet for Pairs or Small Groups

Reciprocal Teaching involves these four reading comprehension strategies: questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. The ultimate goal is for you to become so familiar with these strategies that you use them on your own when reading difficult text to help you understand it better.

With your partner or small group, select someone who will be the Leader first. Later, you will exchange or rotate roles so everyone has a chance to be the Leader based on a different passage of the text. Follow the discussion pattern outlined below. In your conversations, use textual evidence to support your responses.

Leader *(Questioning)*	• Read one paragraph or section aloud to your partner or small group. (Or, your teacher might ask that everyone reads the text silently.) • Think of one literal and one inferential question about the selection. Ask your partner these questions.
Participant(s)	Answer the two questions using textual evidence.
Leader *(Clarifying)*	Identify one or two places in the text that might need clarification or further explanation. Indicate why you chose these spots (e.g., unknown vocabulary, complicated concepts, challenging figurative language).
Leader and Participant(s)	Discuss the reading selection together, focusing on areas that need clarification.
Leader *(Summarizing)*	Summarize the reading material for the participant(s).
Participant(s)	Do any of the following: • Verify that the summary is complete. • Add to the summary. • Correct any part that is not quite right.
Leader and Participant(s) *(Predicting)*	Predict what will happen next, using text evidence to support your predictions.
Read a new section of text. Exchange roles and repeat so another student assumes the role of Leader.	

Figure 3.6: Reciprocal Teaching Resource Sheet

Students can keep a journal or notebook for Reciprocal Teaching. Use this format that explains the role of the teacher and students for complex texts that students read, hear, or watch, such as lectures, guest speakers, presentations, performances, demonstrations, or videos. Also consider adapting this sequence to a nontraditional text (e.g., studying a piece of artwork, sculpture, model, diagram, or photograph). Have students create a heading with a title and date for each entry.

Teacher	• Present a paragraph or section of content via read aloud, silent read, lecture, guest speaker, presentation, or video. • Ask students to create two questions about the content. Be specific as to the types of questions, such as one literal and one inferential. • Invite students to share their questions. Record and display selected ones for the whole class to see. Avoid duplication of questions. • Give students time to accomplish the following tasks.
Individual Students	• Select and record questions in a notebook or journal. • Write answers to those questions you can answer using textual evidence.
Student Partners	• Turn-and-Talk: Turn to a neighbor and review answers to your questions. Verify that the textual evidence is correct; add additional evidence, as needed. • If you and your partner disagree about an answer, underline or highlight it. Be ready to pose the question(s) to the class.
Whole Class	• Discuss confusing questions and arrive at collective answers. • Ask for clarification. • Predict what will happen next in the reading, if applicable.
Teacher	• Summarize reading material for the class.

Sometimes teachers want more tangible evidence of on-task behavior and gleaning from the text beyond observations of students' discussions. If this is the case, during or after their partner, small group or whole class exchanges based on the reciprocal teaching sequence, ask students who work together to complete and submit the graphic organizer shown in Figure 3.7. As a more comprehensive means of individual formative assessment, students can demonstrate understanding in any of the following ways:

• **Dialectical (or double-entry) journals:** Ask students to make a T-chart. They choose one particular quote from the text, enter it on the left side of the chart, and use it as the basis for a response. On the right side, they respond to their selected quote in any number of ways, such as rewriting it in their own words, making an inference, connecting it to another text, explaining its significance, or creating an analogy. Chapter 6 provides a thorough description and recommendations for the types of quotes students can use as the basis for their responses.

- **Exit cards:** During the last few minutes of class, have students write brief responses to a salient question(s) or prompt(s) related to relevant content. Chapter 2 provides a more detailed explanation of this strategy along with suggestions for prompts.

You might want to conduct a version of reciprocal teaching that involves a less formal means of participation—through oral prompt responses in pairs or small groups (see Figure 3.8). Encourage students to lead the discussion by using one of these prompt. Notice that there is some overlap, so choose prompts based on the readiness level of your students and the text at the center of instruction. After students respond to the oral prompts, consider issuing a writing exercise to check for understanding.

Reciprocal teaching is just one strategy you can use to support students as they tackle a complex text. Use a combination of the different approaches presented in this section based on your students and their specific needs. Also consider coupling this strategy with others (e.g., annotation, graphic organizers) from this and other chapters in this book.

Figure 3.7: Reciprocal Teaching Graphic Organizer

Directions: Complete this graphic organizer during or after you participate in a reciprocal teaching exercise.

Text title: _____ Page # (if needed): _____

Create or Copy Questions	Respond to Questions

Make Predictions

Summarize

Answer Any Guiding Question(s)

Figure 3.8: Oral Prompts

PREDICT

Choose one:

1. Based on the cover or title, I predict this book will be about _____.
2. Based on this visual (drawing, graph, chart, picture), I predict that _____.
3. After reading the part about _____, I think _____ will happen.
4. This sentence/word gives me a clue that _____ will happen.
5. I can predict _____ will happen because _____.

SUMMARIZE

Choose one:

1. This paragraph or section is about _____.
2. This story is about _____.
3. The author is making this statement: _____.
4. The author wants readers to understand that _____.
5. (Find and use a summary frame based on the type of text structure: compare/contrast, cause/effect, description, narrative, etc.).

CLARIFY

Choose one or more ways to clarify what is challenging and discuss new insights.

1. Reread a sentence or section.
2. Break down a long sentence into parts, paying attention to the punctuation.
3. Define unfamiliar words by looking at root words, prefixes, and suffixes.
4. Use text features such as bold type, captions, glossary, or visuals.
5. Use a reference.
6. Ask a classmate or the teacher.

QUESTION

Pair question words with helping verbs to frame questions. Then answer them using evidence from the text.

Question Word	Helping Verb
Who	do/did/does
What	can (cannot)
Where	should (should not)
When	will (will not)
Why	might (might not)
How	has/have/had

VISUALIZE

Choose one:

1. When I read/hear this passage _____, I can visualize _____.
2. Seeing _____ in my mind helps me understand _____.
3. I learn more about _____ because I can visualize _____.
4. I can draw a picture of _____ after reading _____.
5. This part about _____ looks a lot like _____.