

Increasing Reading Productivity

The following activities were designed by Clemente High School teachers at workshops on January 30th and February 6th, 2001. They emphasize independent comprehension of text by students. Most include a time limit so that students focus on their reading and increase both their level of comprehension and their rate of reading.

Strategies from Special Education have been integrated into each subject, and there also is a section specifically for Special Education. Those strategies provided by special education teachers also are relevant to other subjects.

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Special Education (*adaptable to most classes*)

- ✓ Look at the two maps of France and figure out which regions contain these four cities: Paris, Chambéry, Avignon and Bordeaux.
- ✓ After reading about the four different cities, which one would you choose to stay for a summer vacation and why? (This is adaptable to many other topics.)
- ✓ List key words on the board. Have students locate the key words together. When keywords are located in the same sentence, write what the keywords are describing.
- ✓ For comprehension: Students are to read a short, timed selection every day at the same time. Multiple choice questions from the story are to be utilized. This could be class or school-wide for comprehension improvement.
- ✓ Pose a question requiring factual info to be gathered from the newspaper (sort of a mystery/detective component). Students scan for evidence and try to solve for the answer. Set time limit.
- ✓ Read aloud a short story for 15 minutes and do some comprehension questions. Reading skills, questions, vocabulary skills and thinking skills.
- ✓ Read the first and last paragraph – make a guess of what your reading will be about – predict what will happen, what the reading is supposed to teach you, etc. (Put this prediction in an envelope, seal and re-read after more complete reading is done.) Discuss how close you came to what you predicted. Students complete this project in __ minutes.
- ✓ Read two pages. Students put the events in order.
- ✓ Students skim text for unfamiliar words. Students use glossary of textbook or dictionary to look up those words.
- ✓ Use graphic organizers to organize information. The teacher will read. After listening, the students will answer (orally) questions related to the chapter.
- ✓ Reading teaches reading. To make reading a pleasure increases the likelihood that children will read and teach themselves. Ask the best readers how they got that way and then provide those experiences to wider groups.
- ✓ Locate specific information in a given story (page assigned that day) such as important phrases that have to do with the theme or evidence to prove a point.
- ✓ Make an outline. Read and put down main points. We'll have 5 minutes for 2 pages.
- ✓ Discuss pages and check for getting the main idea. Write down meaning of new vocabulary words before students read them.

Art

- ✓ Read a chapter's boldfaced title and the first sentence of each paragraph. Answer group of questions. Then next skim it all quickly and answer questions.
- ✓ In ___ minutes, read a page with higher-level vocabulary. Write a set of 10 definitions from the text. Have students read the chapter again and answer questions again. Review with emphasis on establishing vocabulary.
- ✓ Time reading to improve speed. Skim article or part of an article. To ensure comprehension, students draw diagram or make chart showing contents.
- ✓ Time reading to improve speed. Skim pages and have students act out and then write a quiz (multiple choice or true/false) on material to reinforce. Students.
- ✓ Read a story (1 or 1^{1/2} pages long). Take a few minutes to skim it. Read 1st paragraph (1 minute) and write one-sentence summary of it. Read 2nd paragraph (1 minute) and write another one-sentence summary of it, etc. The project will take 15 to 20 minutes. After students are done with this first activity, they can answer questions related to the text. (Questions should be prepared ahead of time). From these exercises you can tell if they understand what they read.
- ✓ Group students in fours. Each member of the group reads two paragraphs. 1st student – 1st paragraph, 2nd student – 2nd paragraph.... Students read for 3-5 minutes/skim then share information and put together in logical order. So others gain information. Share pertinent information.
- ✓ Read directions for a process in ___ minutes. Apply the process.
- ✓ Read a selection describing elements of art. Make a graphic showing an understanding of these elements. Time limit can be set for the reading and for the illustration.

Business

- ✓ Outline main topics and subtopics. Groups are assigned different sections in the chapter. Write a brief summary of the section. Complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Students list ___ important parts of a topic. Set time limit of ___ minutes. Before students give up ask how many are almost done and give some hints.
- ✓ Let the students know the purpose for reading. Intended outcome known in advance. Read the text rapidly and underline important words/ideas by reference to purpose for reading. Then read again and either make-up some multiple choice questions or answer some pre-set questions (true/false or multiple choice). Guide/support the students by restricting reading time and brief discussion prior to reading exercise.

English

- ✓ What is helpful for skimming when reading newspapers and/or magazine articles? When is scanning useful?
- ✓ Read a short story through the setting. Stop and write prediction of what events you expect to occur. Continue reading for allotted time. Return to prediction and relate its accuracy and events that actually occurred.
- ✓ Scan title and subtitles. Write predictions based on this. Read for 10 minutes. Return to prediction and analyze based on the reading.
- ✓ When reading a biography or background info about a person, have students read silently for 15 minutes and then write a one-paragraph introduction as if that person were about to give a speech to Clemente students, and it was your students' job to introduce the person to the crowd.
- ✓ Read a passage and make four multiple-choice questions. Ask class questions. Prize for best questions. Students complete this project in __ minutes.
- ✓ Read article from the newspaper for 10 minutes. Reading process: skim, read, note any unusual vocabulary, summarize, timeline, cause/effect, Venn diagram. Present to class.
- ✓ Read 3 paragraphs in 10 minutes. Make up at least 5 questions to be answered by material just read.
- ✓ Read a selection and chart comparison/contrast if it applies. Students complete this project in __ minutes.
- ✓ In __ minutes, read a short passage of a story (or a poem). List the three most important ideas you learned from what you read. Discuss with partners to evaluate ideas.
- ✓ Read for __ minutes. Find an event and list the causes (or effect) leading up to it.
- ✓ Read a play or a story and write five questions about the reading for other students to answer. Students answer questions, return to the writers for "grading," and questions and answers are discussed as a class to clarify/determine understanding.
- ✓ Read a brief short story; produce a timeline summarizing the main events. Students complete this project in _____ minutes.
- ✓ Read a 1-page explanation of a literary term; create a brief definition of the term based on the reading; compare your definitions with a person sitting next to you.

English (continued)

- ✓ Kids preview text of a short story, captions, questions, read page one (5 minutes). Write one additional question (2 minutes) or write a story based on preview and tell it to partner (5 minutes).
- ✓ Take a book with sections that include titles and subtitles (e.g., historical section in English anthologies). Students write titles only on their paper skipping 5 lines between each title. Students read and skim (while being timed) each section. Students make and answer 5 questions from the section that directly relates to the titles they wrote at the outset of this activity.
- ✓ Same activity but uses giant poster post-its. Teacher (or student) writes title on post-it. Students do timed reading and close the book. Students create and answer on post-it 5 questions.
- ✓ Give students 10 minutes to preview a one-act play. Have students describe (in their own words—no looking at text) main characters.
- ✓ In newspaper on Fridays, have students take fifteen minutes to read medium-sized article and underline words not too familiar and try to explain in your own words what the words mean by context.
- ✓ Read for 5 minutes. Paraphrase, using complete sentences.
- ✓ Read story for 5-10 minutes. Complete the story based on what you know so far.
- ✓ In __ minutes, read a passage and highlight all signal words and transitional phrases; use “signposts” to direct re-reading for specific information (in response to questions). (“Signals” include words such as “however” and “consequently”, “significantly” and “in contrast”).
- ✓ After two paragraphs read, write one to two sentences the main idea of each. Students complete this project in __ minutes.
- ✓ Read for 15 minutes and identify new vocabulary words, find the definition and read paragraphs again.
- ✓ Skim front page of newspaper. Summarize the top 4 or 5 articles on front page. Discuss. See who got the main ideas (topics) correct. Students complete this project in __ minutes.
- ✓ Practice Prairie State Exam excerpts –10 minutes for each one if used on a weekly basis. Students keep track of their progress so they see improvements.
- ✓ Read a paragraph. Circle 10 most significant/meaningful words. Write one word that best encompasses the 10 words. Students complete this project in __ minutes.

Family and Consumer Science

- ✓ Take 10 minutes to read to the middle of a short story and write a paragraph about how you think the story will end. Continue reading to see if your story ending was similar or different.
- ✓ Skim a short story for 5 minutes and then write 5 questions, of what you think will be found in the story. Read the story and see if you can find the answers to your questions.
- ✓ List food terms. Have student use index, write 1 question for each term. First 4 students finished get extra credit. All students get credit.
- ✓ Read a passage in five minutes. Fill in a grid sheet. Make 5 sentences from grid sheet words.

Math

- ✓ Students read section and on chart write the words that appear in bold and a definition. Variation: Students create a matching game. Write the bold words on the left and the definitions (not in order) on the right.
- ✓ Read a magazine article in ten minutes. First skim all paragraphs in the article. Then, in three or four sentences, write what you think the article is about. After this, pose 7-8 questions that you think the writer might be able to answer. Last, read the article thoroughly and try to answer all questions you had. For each question you were unable to answer, write something the writer mentioned that you didn't know.
- ✓ In geometry: if we have to prove a theorem, the students should write down the steps of what they want to do. They should show a plan. Time of this activity should be ten minutes. Five minutes in reading concepts that could help them to solve the problem and five minutes writing the plan.
- ✓ In algebra: students read the problem they have to solve (3 minutes), find out what they do not understand (1 minute), and ask a classmate for a solution if the student is totally confused (5 minutes). Solve the problem together (3 minutes).
- ✓ Read a series of math problems. Draw a picture of the word problem, labeling the parts correctly. Compare with the person sitting behind you.
- ✓ Give each other true-false questions about a subject. Discuss why answers are correct or incorrect.
- ✓ Follow directions for a paper folding activity. It is a listening exercise in addition to a mathematical exercise.

Math (continued)

- ✓ Read the problem, draw a picture of the problem using words and diagrams, re-read the problem, adjust the picture/diagram. (To do this you must find the important words in the problem then think of a symbol or picture to represent the words.) Solve the problem.
- ✓ Have students create flowchart to explain how to deal with differing problems.
- ✓ Have students write story problems to go with a set of algebraic equations.
- ✓ Read the page for 10 minutes about mean, mode and median of a set of dates. Calculate all 3 statistics from this given set and explain your answer. You have 10 minutes to do the calculations.

Music

- ✓ Read a new song. Scan or skim for new notes, new musical terminology, and sections that repeat or use similar music passages. Students complete this project in ___minutes.
- ✓ Read about a composer. Scan for specific facts. Time of life, place where most of work was done (e.g. Salzburg for Mozart), names of most famous works, and styles or types of instruments used. Students complete this project in ___minutes.
- ✓ In ___ minutes, read a story that is too long to be finished. Write (predict) an ending for the story based on what was read and when reading stopped. Accuracy of the made-up ending will be based on accuracy and amount of reading completed.
- ✓ Read the section. Make up a test that matches the composers with music they have written.
- ✓ Read the chapter. Make a list of ways that music, composers and musicians, and life in general (one for each different group) are different from those that we discussed from the last chapter last week. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Popular Music Unit. Read the lyrics to “Rough and Ready,” a political song to the tune “Yankee Doodle” in favor of Zachary Taylor. Then write a summary of the personality traits the author is trying to convey.
- ✓ Given an article/essay written during a particular event in U.S. history, write a paragraph describing the type of song the author would sing (including style and content). Students complete this project in ___ minutes.

Physical Education

- ✓ Ten minutes of reading from the Health book (one topic). Afterwards students make 5 simple answer questions that teacher must answer for homework. (*They thought this was a great idea.*)
- ✓ Knowing attendance will be taken during this time frame. 1. Students have only so many minutes to dress then they are tardy. 2. Exercise will be at this time – if you do not do exercise you cannot participate. 3. Use time frames in game situations, teams have 3 minutes to score this many points. 4. Use in drills with squads, basketball – how many shots made in 1 minute. Testing of each student can be done. 5. Give them specific time to draw up a play using screens, picks, spreading of court.
- ✓ Read chapter three in “Rules of the Road.” Skim the “Right of Way Rules and Laws” for 10 minutes. Translate knowledge into three drawings of situations showing who has the right of way.

ROTC

- ✓ Ask for volunteers to read. No volunteers, then hand pick. Summarize the chapter on what we read, use a crossword puzzle as a quiz. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.

Science

- ✓ Read one page quickly, underlining important words as you go. Once you are finished, skim the page again, this time looking for only the underlined words. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Have students read a page and then construct a chain of events from within the page. Use lab procedure to come up with materials list. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Distribute a photocopied page of text. Students cover up words that aren't key to understanding with a thick marker (after writing a few “main point” questions) and switch with a partner. See if their partner can answer the questions with only the remaining words. Students complete this project in ___minutes.

Science (continued)

- ✓ Read objectives before each section. Students find the answers to the main objectives.
- ✓ Students practice quiz/test type questions and explain “what is the question looking for” and “what info does it give you?”
- ✓ Scan material for words you do not know. Read definition for words or look them up in dictionary. Write sentences using the words. Reread material for understanding.
- ✓ (1) Read the article for 10 minutes. (2) Summarize the main idea using pictures or drawings (5 minutes). (3) Share the drawings with other students (5 minutes).
- ✓ Make a concept map stating the main idea for each bold-faced heading. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Scan the reading assignment — pick out unfamiliar words (at least two per section). Define them; replace with a synonym. Is the original word a better choice? Explain.
- ✓ Read an article for 5 minutes. Write the important things and the most important idea from the article.
- ✓ Read/skim the lab exercise for 5 minutes. Write the sequence of events in the order you will perform them to complete the lab.
- ✓ Read a laboratory procedure for 5 minutes. Then, write a list of materials that you need to do the procedure.
- ✓ Read a page in the text for ten minutes. Write the five most important ideas from the page—not just things that you read first.
- ✓ Read page on balancing equations. Take example equation and work it. Work another equation. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Take a 30 question multiple choice test by assigning 1 question every 90 seconds. Then give test with total of 15 minutes to finish and check with results.
- ✓ Take a page of text. Cross out all articles and read to see how much faster you read by skimming. Then check for understanding.
- ✓ Read one page for 10 minutes. List 5 important facts.
- ✓ Read one page for 10 minutes. Draw an illustration of the information presented. Label the drawing with important words from reading.

Social Studies

- ✓ Newspaper--Students skim newspaper for a specific article and then have them scan the article for the four levels of questions.
- ✓ Newspaper -- Skim for articles that have similar topics and use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast.
- ✓ Scan newspaper -- pull out one article dealing with a social problem. Time student.
- ✓ Take newspaper article and summarize in one paragraph--all important facts. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Read the excerpt from Sinclair Lewis, *The Jungle*. Point out at least three problems related to the unsanitary conditions in the slaughter houses in Chicago around 1906. Which one seemed to require immediate solution? Why? Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Read section 1, chapter 10: "The Industrialization of America." In __ minutes, skim these pages. Identify the key sub-topics to be covered. For __ minutes, read more carefully each of the paragraphs and identify the most important idea in each one.
- ✓ Read notes based on the topic of the week. Have students write 5 multiple choice questions based on the notes. These questions could be used for a test. Time limit 15 minutes.
- ✓ Have students outline a paragraph based on a specific text page and include major facts, i.e. where, when, why, etc. as the basis for the outline. Time limit 10 minutes.
- ✓ In pairs, students are assigned all sections in chapter. They are to write 2-3 questions for each. Teacher types up questions and students answer the next day. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ In pairs, students are to summarize and present one section of chapter to class. The class has a grid of common questions for each section (jigsaw). They pay attention to each other because they must have the entire grid filled out. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Skim 2 paragraphs to get an idea what the order of events is. List 4 events in order. Make a time line. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Look at a paragraph in a newspaper. Find the most important phrase to you. What do you think it means?

Social Studies (continued)

- ✓ Read one page: Take 15 minutes to create 4 multiple choice questions.
- ✓ After 10 minutes of reading the student will create a “What’s Important” star with main idea inside and important points on its rays.
- ✓ Beforehand, poll students – What would you like to read? List all suggestions. Discuss the possibilities, pro vs. con of each one. Then decide. On the day of the reading, remind them we are working on their suggestion. Their sense of ownership in the reading should improve their focus and vigor.
- ✓ Use computer and TV. Have students read short passages for 5 minutes. Students will then list as many facts as possible.
- ✓ You have 10 minutes to compare the maps of Africa and find in the reading the reasons for the political changes.
- ✓ You have 5 minutes to read. Find an example of individuals creating a change that is good for the environment. Describe it.
- ✓ Give students two viewpoints – at the end of ten minutes, quickly write sentence summary of each person’s viewpoint.
- ✓ Read part of chapter – 10 minutes. Write a paragraph summary of chapter—which will be graded on accuracy of order of events.
- ✓ Read a passage, highlight all unfamiliar vocabulary, define and complete a story map (i.e. place, setting, characters, problem, solution).
- ✓ Break a story into sections; create groups to work on one section each. Each group gives a report to the class on its section.
- ✓ P.N.I. Method: Read an article from the newspaper and as an editor focus on the reporter’s article to see if it is a worthwhile (fit to print) story. Justify your decision with evidence from the article on whether its positive features, negative features, or interesting features. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Choose a reading section: Have the student read it and take on the role of that character(s). Identify the character traits and the perspective (pragmatist, idealist, optimist, pessimist) shown in this story.
- ✓ Special Education – History – World Studies: Read material to students, have them underline the answers to the questions which are at the end of the material read. Have them answer the questions using the underlined sentences. After a couple of weeks only have them underline key words, dates. Always emphasize what are they asking you to name.

World Language

- ✓ Have students read for 5 minutes and then stop them. Have students partner up and explain everything they have read in their own words to each other. This checks comprehension and will help them remember what they are reading. If students need to answer questions after reading, have the students read the questions first.
- ✓ Read a story for five minutes. Summarize it in five specific sentences. Follow with class discussion
- ✓ Read the story. Draw the main characters and the location where it takes place. Label important vocabulary in target language. Students complete this project in ___ minutes.
- ✓ Read for five minutes (one page). Take five minutes to look for cognates. Identify the cognates (identical/nearly identical). Make a chart of true vs. false cognates. Read again. Make a chart of important words, listing "What I Knew/What's New." Look up words you don't know.
- ✓ Read the chapter/scene, etc., for 10 minutes. Illustrate the main idea. Use a symbol if it's too abstract.
- ✓ Read the section for 5 minutes. List the facts/events in order of importance to the outcome of the section.
- ✓ "Show Me the Funnies": Present the reading Food & Wine. Draw a cartoon to illustrate the event. Funny comments in bubbles.
- ✓ Read a story aloud or students read silently. They make a time line showing the events included in the reading. Then they rank them in order of importance.