

DATA-DRIVEN INSTRUCTION: STRATEGIES AND TIPS FOR READING/LANGUAGE ARTS

Testing Format Tips:

1. Use the Test-Preparation lessons built into the student anthologies. *See Theme Assessment Wrap-Up.*
2. Have students demonstrate their learning in a variety of formats, including testing formats, on a regular basis (*e.g., find the misspelled word in this writing sample*).
3. Infuse test prep throughout your day, during transitions, and as micro-mini-lessons (*e.g., Morning Message, Daily Language Practice, pocket charts*). Make sure to include practice in having to choose the right answer from multiple choices.

Content Tips:

1. Reading Comprehension

- a. Identify the specific comprehension skills tested. Then look at the way those skills were tested—what kinds of questions were asked?
- b. Use the *HMR California Assessments Correlated to California Standards* green book or binder to match test questions with standards being addressed.
- c. Use your Teacher's Editions, scope and sequence, and support materials, which have lessons, reteaching lessons, extra support lessons and ELL lessons, specifically targeting most comprehension skills.
- d. Teach students to look for clues in the reading, and to go back and reread sections of text.
- e. Teach students the difference between giving their opinion and making an inference.
- f. Teach students the difference between prediction and inference, and ask them to support both predictions and inferences with evidence from the text.
- g. When reading aloud, ask inferential, not just prediction, questions. You must preplan these kinds of questions. When we don't prepare the questions ahead of time, but make them up on the spot, they are often literal, low-level questions. Put the questions on the overhead and ask students to write their answers with justification.
- h. Use *Think Alouds* when you read aloud to model the asking and answering of inferential questions every day. Do this with informational texts as well as literary works.
- i. Ask the Inferential Questions in your Teacher's Editions and Student Anthologies. Tell your students these are Inferential Questions and there are specific strategies they should use to answer them. Have all students respond to inferential questions both orally and in writing.
- j. Use the *Student Onramp Strategies*[®] (*lessons*) to help students develop and practice comprehension and metacognitive strategies.

2. Writing Strategies (Writing)

- a. Know the two basic types of questions addressed in this section of the test. These come straight from the Writing Strategies state standards.
 - 1) The use of *reference materials*: thesaurus, index, categorizing information, parts of a book, guidewords in a dictionary, atlas, interpreting maps, etc.
 - 2) *Organization* of short pieces of text—main idea of a paragraph, topic sentence, title of a short piece of text, finding the sentence that doesn't belong in the paragraph, combining two sentences within a paragraph, keeping to the point, etc.
- b. The use of reference materials is covered in the HM materials, but is often skipped by teachers because of time pressures. These lessons are under the Information and Study Skills block. However, they are easily incorporated into content-area lessons as well.
- c. Target instruction to those who need it:
 - 1) *Most Difficult First*—students who answer correctly the 3-5 most difficult questions on the assignment don't have to complete the rest of the assignment.
 - 2) *Pretest* using the Theme Skills Tests or other resources. Then target instruction just to those who need it.
- d. To teach the organization questions, select a piece of text from the anthology (or use a transparency from the program), and ask the following types of questions:
 - 1) Before you read the text in the anthology, read the first paragraph and ask them to identify the topic sentence.
 - 2) Because students get confused by multiple choice, frame your questions in multiple choice format as much as possible. Number four sentences in the paragraph and rewrite the four sentences below (not in the same order). Have students select the topic sentence or the concluding sentence.
 - 3) Use pieces of anonymous student writing on an overhead to teach sentence combining and to help students find the sentence that doesn't belong or is out of order.

3. Spelling

- a. Know your grade-level standards for spelling.
- b. Teach patterns and structures, as well as memorizing high-frequency words.
- c. Remember that while not all readers are great spellers, most strong spellers are avid readers. Spelling cannot be learned through teacher read-alouds. Students need to read.
- d. Be aware of how spelling is tested. Are students asked to find the misspelled word (proofreading)? Are they asked to choose the correctly spelled word from three similar choices? Give your students practice in a variety of formats.
- e. Make sure students are held accountable in their daily writing for spelling patterns and high-frequency words that have been taught and practiced.