

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 Standards Review* sections.
2. Have students demonstrate their learning in a variety of formats, including testing formats, on a regular basis (*e.g., find the key words that describe the setting*).
3. Infuse test prep throughout your day, during transitions, and as micro-mini-lessons (*e.g., Daily Language Practice, Academic Vocabulary practice*). 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 *Holt Diagnostic & Summative Assessments* softbound book 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 literal, 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 Holt materials, but is often skipped by teachers because of time pressures. These lessons 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* specific skills and strategies. 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.