

Increasing All Students' Chance to Achieve:

Using and Adapting Anticipation Guides With Middle School Learners

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The ability to effectively use reading as a study skill is critical to academic success at the middle- and high-school levels. In an age of high-stakes testing and accountability, content-area specialists, teaching multiple sections of students each day within clearly designated time periods, must focus the majority of their instructional efforts on content-area instruction. This leaves little time for direct teaching of reading skills. This article directs practitioners in the design and use of the anticipation guides, a prereading strategy designed to concurrently increase students' content knowledge and reading comprehension. The authors also offer suggestions for instructional adaptations to facilitate this strategy's use within general, inclusive, and special education settings.

Middle school teachers face many challenges as they help students transition from elementary school to new and often larger schools with different teachers, more schoolwork, more emphasis on grades, and for some students, more of the same problems that plagued them throughout their earlier school years, which include problems with doing homework, following directions, and reading. These challenges are

significant because they impede student learning and successful school performance. They also increase the instructional demands placed on teachers in an age of high-stakes testing and accountability.

Perhaps the most significant challenges, however, are those experienced in the area of literacy. Students' overall academic success is compromised by the lack of well-developed reading and literacy skills (Alverman & Phelps, 1998). It comes as no surprise that even the best readers

struggle at times. However, the difference between good readers and poor ones is that when good readers struggle with text, they employ a number of strategies that allow them to master the troubling area (Vacca & Vacca, 2002). The same is not true for struggling readers. They may need to be taught explicit literacy strategies to help them make sense of text.

In middle school, instruction focuses on acquisition and proficiency of subject matter rather than acquisition and proficiency in reading. Students are expected to read to learn rather than to learn to read (Chall, 1983). Furthermore, middle school teachers are experts in content area. They are responsible for teaching subject matter in a timely, effective manner (Alverman & Moore, 1984; Moore, 1996). Teachers rely on students' ability to read for meaning and understanding, and they assume that students will use textbooks to assist them in learning course content. Unfortunately, if students' reading skills are deficient, teachers rely on a common and critical tool for instruction and learning that is lacking. So the question then is, "How can middle school teachers assist students in mastering content-area knowledge and, at the same time, address the diverse reading skills students bring into their classrooms?"

The Anticipation Guide

An anticipation guide is a prereading strategy that combines literacy instruction and content-area learning. It provides teachers with the skills and tools necessary to address the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities. An anticipation guide can be effective in promoting decoding skills, enhancing word meaning, and strengthening comprehension. In addition, as students move through the statements, they use prediction, controversy, and activation of prior knowledge about the topic as motivational devices to get them involved in the material they will later read. Anticipation guides can be used across content areas, are liked by students, are fairly easy to implement, encompass the elements of effective instruction (Lawson, 2002), and can be used in general, inclusive, and special education classrooms. Anticipation guides are not as well known as other prereading strategies, but they can be very effective teaching and learning tools.

Creating an Anticipation Guide

An anticipation guide consists of a series of statements to which students are asked to respond (Conner, 2003) as a way to activate students' prior knowledge about a topic (Readence, Bean, & Baldwin, 1989). The general method of presenting an anticipation guide is to choose a topic from a unit of instruction about which students will be reading. Prior to reading the content or engaging in any

other form of information acquisition, students react to a series of statements designed by the teacher. Conner noted, "While some of the statements may be clearly true or false, a good anticipation guide includes statements that provoke disagreement and challenge students' beliefs about the topic" (p. 1). In addition, the statements should focus on information in the text that can be identified to support the students' reactions (Duffelmeyer, 1994).

In preparing the guide, the teacher carefully reads the text selection to be read by students and identifies the major concepts or ideas to which the students will react. The teacher may write a short introductory paragraph as a hook to lure student interest. If the teacher chooses not to introduce the reading through a written hook, he or she may substitute an oral introduction or simply focus on the reaction statements.

Depending on the length of the text to be read and the major ideas chosen by the teacher, the guide includes a combination of 5 to 10 accurate and inaccurate statements related to the content. Students react to each statement, either individually or in small groups, by agreeing or disagreeing with it, and later they engage in conversation with their peers about their opinions. As the students converse, the teacher serves as facilitator, giving no hints regarding correct or incorrect responses. Figure 1 is an example of an anticipation guide written by the authors that could focus on such topics as culture, equal education, and discrimination.

After the students have read the assigned passage, they are asked to go back to their initial reactions. They may choose to maintain or change their original thoughts, but they must substantiate their point of view by using information from the text to support their position. This section of the anticipation guide is very important, for it is here that students can begin to develop or enrich their vocabulary, increase their comprehension of more difficult material, and practice using higher order thinking skills. After discussing each statement, students focus on what they have learned and determine if they changed their opinions based on the content they have read. Figure 2 illustrates an example of this section of the anticipation guide.

Adapting the Anticipation Guide

A variety of adaptations may be employed to ensure the anticipation guide is effective for all students, including those with special needs.

Input

Additional visual and auditory supports may help students for whom simply reading the text is insufficient.

1. *Using video, computer, and audio text supplements*—For students whose reading ability is low, the instructor

“An Indian Father’s Plea”

Wind-Wolf knows the names and migration patterns of more than 40 birds. He knows there are 13 tail feathers on a perfectly balanced eagle. What he needs is a teacher who knows his full measure (Lake, 1990, pp. 48–53).

Directions: Below are some statements related to the article “An Indian Father’s Plea.” Read each statement carefully. If you agree with the statement, put a check in the Agree column. If you do not agree, put a check in the Disagree column.

	Agree	Disagree	
1.	_____	_____	The earlier children are identified as “slow learners,” the more effectively an educational program can be developed to meet their needs.
2.	_____	_____	The importance of mother–infant bonding is recognized universally and is accomplished in similar ways across cultures.
3.	_____	_____	Cultural differences prompt different answers to the same questions in school.
4.	_____	_____	Quiet reflection is valued universally in elementary and middle schools.
5.	_____	_____	Discrimination against Native Americans persists today in subtle and overt ways.
6.	_____	_____	Many Indian parents are urged by their leaders to homeschool their children.
7.	_____	_____	“Indian Education” receives financial support from the federal government.

Figure 1. Example of an anticipation guide.

might place the body of the article on disk. The students can look and listen to the article as presented through audio or video text. A paraprofessional, student, or parent volunteer can audiotape the article. In this way, no one loses the essence of any information presented.

2. *Highlighting important thoughts, statements, or concepts from the selection*—For some students, everything they read is important; for others, nothing they read is important. Identifying major ideas, statements, and concepts is a learned activity. Some students have not mastered this skill. There are several ways to highlight the material to be read. For example, the teacher may share with the students during class discussion what should be highlighted, which benefits not only those with learning difficulties but also the entire class. For students with more serious problems, the teacher or some other person may

highlight the text beforehand or work one-on-one or in a special small group with students to guide their highlighting of appropriate text. As an alternative, the teacher may save copies of highlighted text that had been used by others and reuse them with current students.

Size

For some students, the passage to be read is too long, and they are unable to process all the material at one time.

1. *Chunking the length of the text*—Chunking involves dividing the text into smaller sections that are more easily read and understood and for which fewer reaction statements are required. This adaptation may make the text more manageable and result in better comprehension of the text as well as participation in class.

“An Indian Father’s Plea”

Directions: Now read the article “An Indian Father’s Plea.” If what you read supports your choices, place a check in the Yes column. If the text does not support your prediction, place a check in the No column. Write in your own words in the Proof From the Text column the text information that supports your choice.

SUPPORT:

	Yes	No	Proof From the Text
1.	_____	_____	_____ _____
2.	_____	_____	_____ _____
3.	_____	_____	_____ _____
4.	_____	_____	_____ _____
5.	_____	_____	_____ _____
6.	_____	_____	_____ _____
7.	_____	_____	_____ _____

Figure 2. Example of the anticipation guide during and after reading.

Level of Support

To adjust the level of support needed by students, instructors may use different instructional groupings.

1. *Using peer buddies, mentors, or cross-age tutors*—Pairing struggling readers with more proficient ones benefits both students. By explaining what he or she knows, the skilled reader’s comprehension is increased while the unskilled reader receives support in a nonthreatening manner.
2. *Creating cooperative groups*—Cooperative groups can range in size. Teachers may create a group of two to three students with the purpose of adding support for some students. When using this technique, the

teacher should vary the number of groups and group membership so as not to single out one specific student or group of students.

Difficulty Level and Modified Goals

As teachers create anticipation guides, they might consider identifying unit goals all students must master, goals most students must master, and higher level goals some students may attain. Schumm, Vaughn, and Leavell (1994) referred to this as a pyramidal approach to learning.

1. *Implementing a pyramidal approach*—To implement a tiered approach to learning, the instructor can create

a number of anticipation guides that vary in difficulty. It is important that the guides look similar in length and print size so they do not call attention to any particular group of students.

Time

Some students need more time to read the text. Others may have problems comprehending material and need to preview the material.

1. *Giving students an opportunity to read the text at home prior to discussing it in school*—This adaptation allows students more time to read and think about the material. It allows them to feel full membership in the group and does not lessen teacher expectations.
2. *Sharing with a particular student ahead of time the reaction statement to which he or she will be asked to respond*—This adaptation may reduce students' anxiety levels and increase their ability to react more competently in class, which can help enhance their self-confidence as well as their future risk-taking ability.
3. *Using this adaptation as a preteaching guide*—Giving some students an idea of the central concepts of the text through an anticipation guide provides focus on the amount of material that will be covered and helps them keep up with the rest of the class: "The willingness to make adaptations often reflects a belief in the unique abilities and needs of individual students" (Danielson, 1996, p. 11).

Benefits

An anticipation guide takes the process of reading content material from a purely passive state to active participation and discussion. Through prediction, reaction, and controversy, the guide acknowledges students' interests, knowledge about a topic, and personal experience. In addition,

- Anticipation guides are usable across content areas. Articles or selections from text can be taken from any content area.
- They are liked by students. Students appreciate the clear and direct format that anticipation guides afford. The strategy appeals to students because it is interactive and social, encourages discussion, is nonthreatening, and engages them in controversy, which they love at the middle school stage (Richardson, 2000).
- They are fairly easy to implement. After constructing and implementing a few anticipation guides, teachers appreciate their ease and simplicity.
- They are appropriate for at-risk student or students with disabilities. Anticipation guides can be completed by individuals, peer duos, or small groups. In addition, instructional flexibility and the use of adaptations give teachers the means to address a variety of student needs.

- They encompass the elements of effective instruction. Anticipation guides can engage all students in inquiry and problem solving. They involve active participation and offer immediate feedback (Zemmelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998).
- They fit into school improvement plans. Anticipation guides can easily fit into school improvement plans as part of new reading strategies that might be introduced (Lawson, 2002; Spring Hill Middle School, 2002–2003).
- They can be used as study guides. Anticipation guides, when completed, may serve as excellent study guides for students who have difficulty learning material for content mastery. On the basis of the use of anticipation guides as study guides, teachers can easily see the results of student progress when they assess student learning.
- They can be used as formative evaluation devices. Students' pre- and postresponses along with their explanations and appropriate textual references afford teachers an excellent means for assessing students' understanding, content mastery, and ability to locate effective textual support for ideas.

Conclusion

Instructional flexibility and responsiveness demonstrate a teacher's commitment to the learning of all students (Cole et al., 2000; Danielson, 1996). Instruction that uses anticipation guides can provide more than just the most proficient students with the opportunity to succeed. By way of the introductory paragraph created by the teacher, an anticipation guide can pique students' desire to read. In addition, the use of any of the adaptations allows for all students to participate more fully in content-area learning. At the middle-school level, it is imperative that students read to understand the material and read to learn and remember (Lipson & Wixson, 1997). They must become proficient in understanding vocabulary. An anticipation guide is one means of accomplishing each of these demands as well as increasing the possibility that the needs of all students are met.

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