**The Reading Cycle: The Backbone of Backward Design**

**Butler Community College, Kansas**

**Our influences in the reading cycle:**

**Katie Hern,** director of CAP, and her “Inside an Accelerated Reading and Writing Classroom” workshop and **Peter Adams**, originator of ALP, and the workshops he led at BCCC on backward design

**BCC and the reading cycle**

**Before the reading cycle and ALP:** students were not guided into effective reading practices, discussions were mainly instructor led, and development of critical thinking through reading was much less intentional.

**After the reading cycle and ALP:** ALP instructors are trained and mentored to use the Reading Cycle, and ALP students and their Composition I cohort peers are engaged regularly by Reading Cycle activities.

**The Reading Cycle**

**I. Pre-Reading**

**A. Before Reading; Engaging Prior Knowledge**

1. Cells that **fire together,** wire together.

2. Janet Zadina: ". . . the learner must make a connection from his or her existing neural network to the new material."

3. James Zull: The existing neural network of the student’s brain is the utmost significant factor in learning: “No one can understand anything if it isn’t connected in some way to something they already know."

4. Metacognition: At the start of the semester, teach your students how the brain learns, including prior knowledge and plasticity.

**B. How to Engage Prior Knowledge**

**Activity: Think/Pair/Share**

Begin on your own by jotting down some ideas regarding this question individually:

**How do you awaken your students’ prior knowledge before they read?**

While you are chatting with your partner, jot down some of the ideas you brainstorm together:

**Methods for Engaging Prior Knowledge:**

1. Concept Mapping

2. Providing background info

3. Short Lecture

4. Relevant Video

5. Quick Writes and Journals

6. Engagement Strategies (World Cafe; Give one, get one, Speed Dating)

7. Introducing Relevant Terms

**Engaging Prior Knowledge Example: Plato's Allegory of the Cave**

1. Concept Map

2. Jigsaw

3. “Cave Drawings”

4. Showing a Diagram

5. Explaining Background

**Activity: Concept Map/Jigsaw**

Use *concept maps* to engage prior knowledge, practice synthesis of ideas and build conceptual schema, take advantage of distributed cognition, and generate ideas in advance of students’ encounter with the text.

Use jigsaw sharing to distribute ideas to the entire class and allow students an opportunity to articulate and re-articulate their ideas while hearing other students do the same. Repetition bears fruit when students later speak in class or begin to settle on language useful in written assignments, while the group dynamic emphasizes the collaborative nature of idea generation.

**C. The importance of Pre-Reading:** Pre-reading is a step that is easy for English teachers to overlook because we are book lovers, so we naturally do this.

Plus, the students did not select these books. When a reader selects a book, they are naturally interested in the subject matter or know something about it, but since these books are chosen for the students, we must integrate this process in the class.

**II. During Reading**

**A. Previewing**

1. Preview table of contents, headings, first and last sentences, etc., and make predictions

2. Establishing Reading Purpose

3. Annotating— Teach students how to annotate.

* Modeling how to annotate during class previewing/lecture is a simple but easy way to teach annotation.
* Also be ready to work through students' issues of writing in books. Encouraging annotations in pencil or with post-it notes can be helpful for some students.

**B. While Reading**

1. Annotate according to Reading Purpose and own questions and reactions

2. Reading Logs

3. Analyzing what an author “says” and “does”

**C. Establishing Good Habits**

1. Rita Smilkstein: "When learners have all this invaluable metacognitive knowledge, they are empowered to be self-responsible and to have self-efficacy."

2. Make it a practice to talk to your students about how the brain changes in learning (plasticity).

**III. After Reading**

**A. Accountability: Tie points to reading**

1. Quizzes

2. Activities

3. Summaries

4. Annotation Checks

* Consider checking annotations at the beginning of class for points instead of a quiz; this will give you a chance to praise quality annotations and encourage students on what specific improvements they need to make.
* Also, consider having students compare their annotations as a formal activity or make it a question during speed dating.

**Think/Pair/Share: What do you do when they don't read?**

**B. Processing Ideas**

1. Intentionally Moving up Bloom’s hierarchy and stimulating critical thinking

2. Reading Journals

3. Speed Dating

4. Jigsaw—analyzing text in groups

5. World Cafe

6. Socratic Seminar

7. Reflection after activities

**Activity: Speed dating**

To review the mechanics of speed dating paired conversations or find sample speed dating questions used today, find a handout in our presentation posting on CADE 2016’s website.

**C. Putting it to Use**

1. Zadina: “We have to not only fire the network; we have to wire it. That means working with material over a period of time and in a recursive nature rather than rushing through it in a linear fashion.”

2. Moving to Writing: The reading cycle leads students straight into the paper. Where the reading cycle ends, the paper picks up.

**IV. Connection to Backward Design**

The structured Butler Reading Cycle allows for clear and smooth lesson coordination between the developmental course and the college-level course.

When scheduling coordinated reading-cycle lesson plans, it has been helpful to keep in mind one important end goal – After Reading: Putting it to use. Starting with, for example, a date on the calendar designated for the launch of an essay assignment and working backwards in planning both courses has been helpful.

For each step of the process – Before, During, and After Reading – a preparatory version may be completed in the developmental class. For example, one might introduce concepts by using a video or other media in the developmental class before using a concept mapping exercise on a later date in the college-level class.

This reinforcement has the benefit of giving confidence to students in the developmental course. A head start gives them more to contribute to exercises in the college-level class; indeed, these students often become reliable “ringers,” leading the class toward a smooth, rich discussion.

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