

## AN INTRODUCTION TO PREDICTION

In this new online edition of *Learning to Predict and Predicting to Learn*, links to many of the resources, children's books, and young adult books are provided. In some cases, where the meaning was not changed, the link directs to a newer version of the book.

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*Prediction*. The word comes to the English language by a circuitous route that began in Rome. The Latin prefix *præ-*, which we know as *pre-*, means "before." It is familiar in the words *prefabricated*, *prepare*, *preposition* and *prewrite*. *Dicere* seems less familiar, at first; however, the past participle, *dictus*, can be found in words like *diction*, *dictionary*, *dictator*, and *prediction*. *Dicere* means to speak. A *prediction*, traced etymologically back to Latin, means something spoken in advance of an event. If you are able to see the connection between the Latin roots and prefixes and the modern English words like *dictation* and *benediction*, then you are familiar with the first principle of good prediction. You looked for and found patterns and associated ideas that at first seemed incompatible. Our brains are wired to do exactly that; make creative and precise predictions based on what we know and the patterns we recognize so we can anticipate what

might come next. Our job as teachers is to help students recognize patterns and connect with what they already know to help them become better readers and thinkers.

***What Is Predicting?***

Predicting is a process of refining and thinking with precision. Learning to make, revise, and revisit predictions will provide students with information about how authors write, why they write what they do, and how readers can more meaningfully interact with texts. Teaching students to make predictions and learn from their predictions will ensure that students do, in fact, read and write more and better.

So which strategies ensure students become facile with learning to predict? What instructional strategies and teaching approaches help students become proficient at prediction? What evidence-based rationale supports how predicting to learn and learning to predict becomes a critical facet of reading comprehension? These are the questions that this text answers.

***Predictions Create Purpose***

What motivates us to learn, to create, to discover or explore, or to understand, is vital. It is, however, often

ignored. Why should students learn that electrons orbit around the nucleus? Obviously, because the teacher says it is important; it is going to be on the test, after all. Even if teachers are compelled to use extrinsic motivational tools in their teaching practice, the most thoughtful educators know that learning is best when the student wants to learn because the learning itself is interesting. We know students who could not have cared less about their grades, yet were motivated to know the human condition of the greasers in *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), to spend lunch time voluntarily exploring the journey of Lewis, Clark, and the Corps of Discovery, or to understand the complexity of the decision to drop the first nuclear weapon during World War II. The apparent puzzle of students who will not turn in daily work but will spend hours investigating a subject of interest suggests to us that a search for that which is meaningful is far more powerful as a motivator than any score in a grade book. Thinkers look for patterns that are meaningful where otherwise there is great ambiguity. Prediction, as Alfie Kohn (1993) pointed out, can be a powerful means for promoting curiosity, discovery, and engagement.

***Predictions for Learning***

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In teaching students to predict, we teach them to become experts. The novice learners of our subject matters and other course content must attend to a great deal of information. Through expert instruction, such novice learners become increasingly familiar with the material, some of the episodic (or historical) links may begin to disappear, and the rich connections that are worth the learner's attention increase. In prediction, we attend to those features that are most relevant to the problem at hand bringing to bear an increasing store of relevant information. The novice learners in our classrooms can become experts in the content of our lessons, and they can become experts at learning.

***The Structure of This Book***

This text is divided up into four distinct parts. Part I explores why teaching students to predict with precision is an important aspect of reading. We consider various learning theories and information about the way the brain processes and stores information. Part I provides the rationale for sustained focus on predicting as well as the evidence base for defending its use.

In Part II this e-book, we turn our attention to the cognitive strategies involved in predicting. These are things that readers do to make and revise predictions. Of

course, these strategies can be taught through modeling and discussion. Each of the cognitive strategies in this section is explained and a procedure for teaching students how to use the prediction strategy is laid out. Each strategy closes with authentic classroom examples and artifacts to help you teach them to students.

The third part of this book focuses on instructional strategies - classroom routines - that can be used to facilitate the use of predicting such that students incorporate this type of thinking into their habits. When this occurs, cognitive strategies move to the unconscious control and become skills that the reader automatically uses while reading and thinking. Of course, this is the goal of our instruction - the development of skilled readers who automatically deploy a number of strategies in real time, as they need them.

The final part of this book, part 4, focuses on routines students can use to learn from the predictions they make. Making predictions is necessary, but learning from predictions (especially predictions that were incorrect) is even more important in developing long term understanding. In part four, we consider the specific use of strategies and routines for specific students, based on what we know about them. As you'll see these, learner

profiles help us apply the right strategy at the right time, which is part of our definition for teaching with precision.

**Conclusion**

Our experience suggests that predicting is an excellent over-arching structure under which a great deal of instruction can be delivered. Learning to predict and learning from predictions is not limited to a specific grade level or content area—predicting is something that has to permeate classroom instruction and interaction. As students are expected to read increasingly difficult texts, they need guidance in using cognitive strategies with unknown vocabulary, complex ideas, and writers who use sophisticated structures and subtle ideas to communicate.

Over time, and with guidance from their teachers, students will incorporate a number of cognitive strategies into their reading repertoires. When they do so, they will read like experts.

### References

Hinton, S. E. (1967). *The outsiders*. New York, NY: Dell.

Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise and other bribes*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

### Additional Resources

Collins, K. (2004). *Growing readers: Units of study in the primary classroom*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

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