Annotation Strategies for Deeper Learning

Educator teaches effective reading strategies that promote close reading and deeper learning.

**Key Method**

The educator helps students create annotations that are selective, metacognitive, textually dependent, and useful.

**Method Components**

Expert readers employ several key strategies to monitor their comprehension and engage with the text as they read: summarizing, asking and answering questions, concept mapping, activating prior knowledge, and recognizing patterns. Non-expert readers greatly benefit from explicit instruction in these strategies, particularly when the strategies are used to study meaningful course content. Annotation is one of the best ways to instill these reading strategies and make them visible for both students and teachers. Because annotation encourages students to read texts closely and actively, it is one of the primary ways to deepen learning.

Components of Successful Annotation

- **Selective**: Annotating requires students to select key pieces of text for analysis. Students should be reading for a purpose and using annotations to focus their attention.

- **Metacognitive**: Annotating allows students to track how they are thinking as they read. Gaining insight into what students struggle with and how they construct knowledge is useful to both the student and the teacher.

- **Textually dependent**: Annotations should reference the text and interpret what the author is trying to say. Annotations that merely reflect personal opinions have been shown to be less effective in developing reading comprehension.

- **Useful**: Annotating should help students organize and retain information that is pertinent for class discussion and further study.

**Modeling**

Educator explains and models key annotation strategies through a think-aloud, projecting a document for the class and annotating it or sharing photocopies of an annotated document. The annotation strategies will vary according to the objectives of the assignment and the particular text being read.

Key strategies to highlight:

- Summarizing
- Questioning
- Predicting
Making connections
Finding the main idea and key details
Outlining text structure
Identifying and defining new words

Assessment
Educator asks students to annotate a text on their own with specific guidelines that target the objective of the reading and the type of text being annotated. Students may be asked to summarize key passages, identify examples of figurative language, take note when they do not understand the meaning of the text, and/or generate questions for discussion using specific passages from the text.

Educator then assesses these annotations, either by circulating the room, collecting students’ annotations and giving written feedback, or by prompting students to share their annotations in a group setting. Educator uses annotations to inform instruction by investigating what students found most compelling in the text, what they were confused by, etc.

Supporting Research
- Comprehension Part II Text Comprehension Instruction p. 260

Resources
- Teaching Channel https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/student-annotated-reading-strategy
- Critical Reading Strategies for Your Students, Reading Horizons http://bit.ly/2kY1IDQ

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Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

The items in this following section detail what must be submitted for evaluation. To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing evaluation for Parts 1, 3, and 4 and a “Yes” for each component in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions
(450-word limit total):

**Activity Description:** What text(s) were students annotating, and what was the deeper learning objective?
- **Passing:** Text description and deeper learning objective are clear, with sufficient detail to understand how annotating would further student learning.

**Activity Evaluation:** How did you know that students were effectively annotating the text(s)?
- **Passing:** Evaluation process is clear, appropriate, and sufficient to evaluate whether students were effectively annotating the texts. Educator discusses the method of evaluation and the process to ensure that annotations were effectively implemented.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts
Please submit evidence toward your demonstration of competency in teaching effective annotation strategies. This may be in a photocopy of student annotations from an assignment, a copy of your instructional guidelines for annotations, or a video of your class annotating a text together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annotations Are Selective</th>
<th>Annotations Are Metacognitive</th>
<th>Annotations Are Textually Dependent</th>
<th>Annotations Are Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Yes&quot;</td>
<td>Reader is identifying the most important information.</td>
<td>Reader is reflecting on his or her own thought process by making connections, generating questions for further inquiry, or otherwise transforming the text to demonstrate the thought process.</td>
<td>Reader is focusing on what the text is trying to say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Almost&quot;</td>
<td>Reader is selecting information somewhat randomly.</td>
<td>Reader is mostly restating what the text is saying, with little interpretation or analysis.</td>
<td>Reader is mostly relying on personal opinions rather than trying to understand the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Not Yet&quot;</td>
<td>Reader is not focusing on annotations at all.</td>
<td>Reader is not transforming the text at all.</td>
<td>Reader is solely relying on personal context rather than trying to understand the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some of the annotations might prove useful for further study, discussion, or writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reader is not thinking ahead of how the notes will be used and is creating disorganized, illegible commentary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3. Student Reflection
Please submit two student-created reflections on their experience of using annotation strategies. Use the following questions as a guide (200-word limit for each reflection):

- How did the annotation strategies help you to better understand and engage with the text?
- How did the annotation strategies better prepare you for class discussions and subsequent writing assignments?
  - **Passing:** Student reflections clearly indicate how the annotation strategies helped the student to better understand and engage with the text and clearly discuss how annotation strategies were able to further learning goals in terms of class discussion and writing. The reflections are specific and convincing.

Part 4. Educator Reflection
Provide a reflection on what you learned using the following questions as a guide (200-word limit):

- What was the impact of having students annotate their texts?
- How will you use students’ annotations to shape and inform your instruction in the future?
  - **Passing:** Reflection clearly indicates how annotation affected students and teacher in regard to the text that was studied and clearly states how annotation will impact future instruction. The examples given are specific and convincing.