
Introduction

The Knowing-Doing Gap

In 2000, Jeffery Pfeffer and Robert Sutton, two graduate professors of organizational behavior at Stanford University, gave the world a new way of thinking about underachievement. By comparing the practices of underachieving organizations with successful ones, Pfeffer and Sutton discovered that the differences in achievement had very little to do with knowledge levels. Successful organizations didn't know more than underperforming ones. The difference was that successful organizations were adept at taking the next step, at converting their knowledge into meaningful action. Underperforming organizations, on the other hand, had a difficult time implementing what they knew. They suffered from what Pfeffer and Sutton called the "knowing-doing gap."

In teaching, as in organizational management, the knowing-doing gap carries an important lesson. Today's teachers know better than any generation of teachers before what works in the classroom. Thirty years of educational research have given the educational community a clear picture of what effective instruction looks and sounds like. And still many classrooms remain unchanged by this knowledge: The knowing-doing gap persists.

This is hardly the fault of teachers. Rather, it's more the result of a certain level of disconnect between the research community and the realities of the classroom. Turning research into meaningful action is not an overnight process, no matter how clear the practice or strategy sounds on paper. Mastering instructional strategies and adapting them to the specific needs of your students takes time and effort. This raises the question, How do teachers bridge the knowing-doing gap?

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Introducing Reading for Meaning

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ FOR MEANING?

Most of us have been reading for so long that we have forgotten just how difficult the act of making meaning from texts can be. Sometimes, it takes a challenging text to remind us that understanding what we read is not always an automatic process. So, let's begin by exploring the question of what it means to read for meaning by way of a poem that's been enchanting readers for almost a century. Below is D. H. Lawrence's short poem "Piano." Like all good poetry, this poem requires—and rewards—close and careful reading. As you read the text, pay attention to your own reading process. What reading and comprehension strategies do you use to extract meaning from the text?

Piano

By D. H. Lawrence (1918)

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.
In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.
So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

So, how did you do? Were you able to make sense and meaning out of “Piano”? Did one word, or image, or stanza in particular give you more trouble than the others? More important, *what* did you do? What kinds of strategies and mental processes did you use to help you comprehend the text? This little innocent-sounding question—*What do you do to help you read well?*—turns out to be one of the most revolutionary questions in the history of reading research.

You see, for many years, reading research was focused largely on the problems and difficulties that struggling readers faced. The prevailing concern was with what readers could not do rather than with what they could do. Then, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a paradigm shift occurred. A new generation of researchers—Robert Tierney, P. David Pearson, Ruth Garner, James Cunningham, Annemarie Palinscar, Ann Brown, Michael Pressley, Peter Afflerbach, and others—began asking a new question: What do good and great readers do that makes them more successful than their peers? What this new generation of researchers discovered was that proficient readers engage in a common set of skills and behaviors that help them read and understand even the most challenging of texts. And what was the most common finding of all, the finding that united all the research? Good readers are always active readers; their minds are busy with the work of making meaning before they read a single word of text and all the way through the process, including well after they have closed the book. Michael Pressley, one of our foremost experts on reading instruction who conducted a comprehensive review of more than sixty proficient-reader studies, puts it this way, “in general, the conscious processing that is excellent reading begins before reading, continues during reading, and persists after reading is completed” (Pressley, 2006, p. 57).

Reading for Meaning is a strategy built from the findings of the proficient-reader research. But its origins can be traced further back, to a well-known reading strategy called an Anticipation Guide (Herber, 1978). A typical Anticipation Guide previews the content of reading using simple statements. Statements can be true, false, or open to interpretation. Students read the statements and then decide whether they agree or disagree with each one before they read the text. After completing the reading, students go back to the statements to determine whether their initial predictions held or changed. An Anticipation Guide is shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 3.3 Q-SPACE**Q-SPACE**

Question students to help them think in depth when responding;

Provide sufficient **S**ilence and waiting time;

Probe student answers for further explanation;

Accept student answers;

Have students **C**larify their thinking by asking questions like “Do you mean . . . ?”;

Ask students to **E**laborate upon an idea by asking questions like, “Can you tell me more?”

For example, the teacher who designed the Declaration of Independence lesson assigned this task to her students:

So now that you know what the Declaration of Independence says and why it's important, it's time for you to pass on what you've learned to others. But here's the twist: You'll need to imagine that your audience is a group of third graders. How would you develop a retelling of the Declaration of Independence so that an eight-year-old would understand it? Your retelling should

- Be no longer than one page.
- Include three big ideas from the Declaration of Independence.
- Explain why the Declaration of Independence is so important for Americans.

Of course, not all synthesis tasks need to be written products. Figure 3.4 shows a synthesis task designed by a second-grade teacher using Reading for Meaning to help students identify and visualize major plot points in the Native American story “Turtle Races With Beaver.” For the final task, students had to create an eight-panel storyboard to show the beginning, conclusion, and major developments in the story.

Understanding Questions ask students to . . .	Self-Expressive Questions ask students to . . .
<p><i>Make connections:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the similarities and differences? • What are the causes and effects? • How are the parts connected? <p><i>Interpret, infer, and prove:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why? Can you explain it? • What evidence supports your position? <p><i>Explore underlying meanings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the hidden assumptions? • What conclusions can you draw? • What does the author mean by _____? • Can you define a concept or idea? 	<p><i>Explain metaphorically or symbolically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is _____ like _____? • Develop a metaphor for _____. <p><i>Develop images, hypotheses, and predictions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would happen if _____? • Can you imagine _____? What would it look/be like? • Can you form a hypothesis or prediction? <p><i>Develop original products:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a poem, icon, skit, or sculpture to represent _____.

SOURCE: From *Reading for Academic Success, Grades 2–6: Differentiated Strategies for Struggling, Average, and Advanced Readers* (p. 221), by R. W. Strong, H. F. Silver, and M. J. Perini, 2008, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Figure 5.8 Sample Comprehension Menu 1

Primary School Mathematics	
<p><i>Coins</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Mastery</p> <p>What is each coin worth? Fill in the chart below:</p> <p>Penny = _____¢</p> <p>Nickel = _____¢</p> <p>Dime = _____¢</p> <p>Quarter = _____¢</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interpersonal</p> <p>Which coin is your favorite? Give at least three reasons for your choice.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Understanding</p> <p>Why do we need four different kinds of coins?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Self-Expressive</p> <p>Can you come up with five different ways to make 25¢ using different coin combinations?</p>