

Practical Classroom Activities for Teaching Inference

A review of the Lori Oczkus book, *Super 6 Comprehension Strategies*

Chapter 4: Inferring

by Joan E. Masaryk

Since Lori Oczkus will be the keynote speaker for ACRA's mini-conference on October 1, it seems appropriate that our first research review would be from her book, *Super 6 Comprehension Strategies*. Those of us who have attended Lori's workshops and read her books know how practical, helpful and insightful her ideas are to meet the daily challenges of teaching.

On page 83 of her book, Lori begins with "Inferring according to Anderson and Pearson (1984) is the heart of meaning construction for learners of all ages..." On page 84, Lori reminds us that inferring is difficult for students because it requires orchestrating a number of strategies (connecting, questioning, predicting) while considering one's own knowledge with evidence from the text, in order to draw conclusions. The teaching of inference is best accomplished by lots of modeling and think-alouds by the teacher, followed by student practice and teacher feedback. Lori provides teacher lessons, student practice activities and assessments to enable students to infer successfully.

Lori finds students understand inferring if they see themselves as detectives using the reading strategies they have as tools to find evidence from the text, and their background knowledge so that they can draw conclusions. One clever procedure Lori uses to help students infer is on a two-column inference chart labeled: **What we think!** and **How do we know?** This helps students understand what clues are explicit in the text and what clues are understood from making connections.

Also on page 84, Lori points out that pictures and illustrations are great tools to help students infer. Often picture and illustrations give information not in the text. Helping students infer by studying pictures and illustrations increases student comprehension.

On page 86, Lori has a chart of questions that enable students to infer before, during and after reading: "How do I know?, What clues from the text and from experience helped me?, I infer the theme is ____ because ____." These charts with numerous questions are an enormous help in providing direction, guidance and structure for an inference lesson.

Lori's chapter on inferring is very valuable. She has classroom vignettes and suggestions for working with Struggling Readers, Gifted Students, Guided Reading and Literature Circles. (Pages 87, 100, 102) Lori's book is a gold mine of practical procedures for teaching the Super 6 comprehension strategies. Her chapter on inferring is my favorite because it's many practical ways help students succeed with the heart of comprehension: inference.