Unit of Study:
Good Readers Test-taking Strategies

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District
Elementary Language Arts Department, Grades 3-5
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## MINI-LESSONS

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Good Readers Test-taking Strategies
Overview of the Unit

PURPOSE:
The purpose of the Good Readers Test-taking Strategies is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and problem-solving strategies they need to effectively approach the specific demands and challenges they will encounter on standardized reading tests. In his book, What Every Elementary Teacher Should Know about Reading Tests (From Someone Who Has Written Them), Dr. Charles Fuhrken maintains the following thoughts about test preparation:

Making short work of informing teachers about what they need to know about state reading assessment to prepare their students means giving back to them their instructional time that is often wasted on test practice instead of valuable reading instruction. It’s really this simple: The more teachers know about the content of reading tests and the strategies students can use to access test items, the quicker they can deliver that information to their students, not in the form of worksheets, but through focused test preparation that involves rich, lively, engaging reading and thoughtful, meaning-making experiences with their peers. How freeing.

Without comprising best practices, teachers can confidently prepare their students for the rigors and unique demands of standardized reading tests through a collaborative approach and study of the reading test genre. During this unit, students will have opportunities to:

- examine the genre features of standardized reading tests
- collaborate with their teacher and peers to discuss and apply effective problem-solving strategies for reading passages and answering questions
- discuss the essential vocabulary found on standardized reading tests
- develop a plan for approaching and making sense of test passages
- analyze and classify question types to determine what a question is asking
- apply problem-solving strategies to locate text evidence to support correct answer choices and disprove incorrect answer choices
- evaluate and determine the most effective strategies they can use to develop the necessary stamina and self-efficacy for approaching standardized tests with confidence

LENGTH OF THE UNIT:
Research cited by Dr. Frank Serafini in his article, Standardized Tests as a Genre, suggests that test preparation should be characterized by the following elements:

- intensive – timed right before the test for short periods each day
- cooperative – teachers and students work together to negotiate meaning
- non-threatening – opportunity to “show what you know”
- short & to the point – reduces burn out and improves performance

A total of 12 mini-lessons are included in the reading test-taking unit of study. Teachers need to select and modify the mini-lessons to address the needs of their learners. As a result, some mini-lessons may need to be re-taught or explored in greater depth. The lessons are
progressive in nature and can be taught over a period of 2-3 weeks. The unit is intended to be taught prior to the district grade-level Curriculum-Based Assessment. During the unit of study, teachers should continue to teach the comprehension mini-lessons featured on the grade-level scope and sequence chart. A portion of the reading workshop block will be used for teaching the Good Readers Test-taking Strategies unit of study. It is recommended that the mini-lesson and student practice of the featured test-taking strategy last no longer than 20 minutes each day, which will allow a similar amount of time for the regular comprehension mini-lesson and independent reading block. Teachers may continue to confer with students and/or work with students in small-groups during the independent reading and practice portion of the reading workshop.

**INTENDED USE**

This document is a resource for teaching students how to successfully navigate reading tests and thoughtfully apply problem-solving strategies in order to read passages and answer test questions using carefully selected text evidence. An anticipated outcome of the unit is that students will reflect on their own use of self-monitoring strategies to make sense of what they are reading, and they will consider how these strategies can be combined with the tactics that good readers apply when approaching the unique demands of standardized reading tests. At the conclusion of the test-taking unit, students will apply the strategies they learned during the grade-level Curriculum-Based Assessment, which mimics the conditions and procedures required on the state’s standardized reading test.

**Unit of Study: Good Readers Test-taking Strategies**

_Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D., Curriculum Department – Revised December 2012_
Essential Understandings

Reading Test Genre Features

Students will understand that:
- a variety of genres, including fiction and nonfiction, are organized differently
- the paragraphs in test passages are numbered, which helps readers locate the paragraphs cited in questions
- the paragraphs in 1-column passages are numbered in the left margin
- the paragraphs in 2-column passages are numbered in both the left and right margins
- the pages in the reading test are numbered
- arrows with the words “Go on” at the bottom of the page inform the test-taker to continue with the test
- a hexagon with the word “Stop” at the bottom of the page inform the test-taker that they have reached the end of the test
- directions for a section of the test may be written at the top of a page in a box
- the text around the underlined words in the passage provides clues to the meaning of the words that are found in the questions
- information about a passage or section of the test may be written at the top of a page or below the title
- text written in italics prior to the main passage includes information that will help the reader understand the passage
- photographs, illustrations, and other visuals provide important information that help the reader understand the selection
- captions provide important details to explain visual such as photographs, illustrations, and other visuals
- visual representations of text, including webs, timelines, charts, lists, boxes, diagrams, and graphic organizers may be used to organize information in the passage or question

Test Items and Answer Choices Genre Features

Students will understand that:
- the test items or questions are located directly after a passage (except for the paired passages in 4th and 5th grade)
- each test item includes 4 possible answer choices
- only 1 of the 4 answer choices for each test item is correct
- a test item may include a complete sentence that ends in a question mark
- a test item may include a partial sentence that ends in a dash (–), which signifies that the statement continues on to the answer choices
- answer choices that are written in italics contain the exact words found in the text
- test items with graphic organizers inform the reader to look at the graphic organizer and use it to answer the question located below it

Marking Answer Choices

Students will understand that:
- 3rd graders mark the answers in the ovals found in the text booklet next to the answer choices for each question
- 4th and 5th graders mark the answers in the ovals on the separate scan sheet

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Students will be able to:
- locate and mark the matching number of the test item on the scan sheet
- darken the oval or circle of the answer choice selected for each question
- erase stray marks in the booklet or on the scan sheet

Problem-Solving Strategies

Students will understand that good readers:
- make a plan and establish a purpose for reading passages
- apply strategic thinking and problem-solving strategies to help them locate text evidence to answer passages
- use self-monitoring and fix-up strategies to clarify meaning when the text doesn’t make sense and to determine unfamiliar words

Students will be able to:
- establish a purpose for reading different genres using the title, text features, and what they know about the organization and characteristics of the genre
- use the text features in nonfiction passages to help them locate important details and text evidence
- use what they know about plot structure and the narrative organization of fiction to answer questions about stories
- use self-monitoring and fix-up strategies to clarify meaning and strengthen comprehension
- locate the numbered paragraph in the text that matches the number found in a specific question
- read around the underlined words in a passage to locate text clues to determine the meaning of the words
- paraphrase questions to help them determine what they are asking the reader to do
- classify questions and use the appropriate strategies to answer the question
- identify the key words and phrases in questions that will help them locate text evidence in the passage
- use the skim and scan process to locate key words and phrases in the passage
- read around the key words and phrases to identify text evidence that can be used to answer specific questions
- use text evidence to support a correct answer choice or disprove incorrect answer choices
- formulate an answer to a question in their mind using text evidence before they examine the answer choices
- eliminate incorrect answer choices using text evidence and separating them into “definitely wrong” and “maybe right” categories

Self-Efficacy and Stamina

Students will understand that:
- the increased stamina necessary for a test happens over time when students read “just right” books independently for increasingly longer periods of time during reading workshop and at home
- positive self-talk helps readers counter test anxiety and fatigue
- taking brief mental breaks after each passage helps readers clear their mind, refocus, and concentrate on the next test-taking task
• resting the eyes, stretching and relaxation exercises, taking deep breaths, getting a drink of water, and taking a restroom break are ways to provide one’s self with mental breaks

*Students will be able to:*
• use appropriate strategies to improve focus and concentration during reading tests
• build stamina over time through regular independent reading that increases the number of minutes read in a single session
• evaluate and determine effective test-taking strategies that enhance a reader’s strengths and reduce a reader’s limitations
FORMAT OF THE LESSONS:

Lessons in this unit are written using the format recommended by Lucy Calkins and other teacher researchers working at Teacher’s College at Columbia University. More detailed information about the format of the mini-lesson can be found in Chapter 5 of *The Art of Teaching Reading*. Below, however, is a short checklist which describes the amount of time spent in each part of the mini-lesson, as well as a brief description of what should be happening during each portion.

**Steps in a Mini-Lesson**

**Connection (1-2 minutes)**
___ I connected today’s work with our ongoing work.
___ I explicitly stated my teaching point.

**Teach (5-6 minutes)**
___ I restated my teaching point.
___ I told a personal or class story connected to the teaching point.
___ I demonstrated by thinking aloud.
___ I pointed out things students should have noticed.

**Active Involvement (2-3 minutes)**
___ I asked students to be actively involved by turning and talking.
___ I listened / observed / coached their active involvement.
___ I shared an example of what I heard / observed.

**Link (1-2 minutes)**
___ I restated the teaching point.
___ I told students how what I had taught can be used in the future.
# LESONS INCLUDED IN THE UNIT OF STUDY:

The following is a list of lessons that are included in the *Good Readers Test-taking Strategies* unit. Each lesson has been assigned a number that correlates to the number found in the upper right corner of each mini-lesson. The lesson numbers signify a sequence or progression for teaching the test-taking mini-lessons. Teachers are encouraged to personalize and select appropriate lessons for their students.

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<tr>
<th>Lesson Title</th>
<th>Focus/Purpose</th>
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<td>Good readers recognize and use the genre features of reading tests to navigate the test and apply effective strategies to answer questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 The Vocabulary of Test Talk</td>
<td>Good readers use their knowledge of test vocabulary to help them understand directions, determine the purpose for reading passages, and understand what a question is asking them to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Activate Schema &amp; Read for Fun (Meaning)*</td>
<td>Good readers activate schema by looking at text features to determine Who and What a passage is about and to set a purpose for reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Making a Plan: Chunk, Picture, &amp; Summarize*</td>
<td>Good readers stop after reading chunks of text to think about the ideas and summarize them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Identify Key Phrases in Question Stems &amp; Read to Find Text Evidence*</td>
<td>Good readers identify and use the key words found in question stems to help them locate text evidence for answering the questions to a passage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Predict &amp; Eliminate Answer Choices*</td>
<td>Good readers use text evidence to think about the answer to a question in their head, and they eliminate answer choices that are definitely incorrect.</td>
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*Note: It is recommended that lessons marked with an asterisk (*) be taught prior to the reading grade-level CBA administration.*
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<th>Mini-lesson:</th>
<th>Understanding the Genre Features of Reading Tests</th>
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<td><strong>Objective:</strong></td>
<td>Good readers recognize and use the genre features of reading tests to navigate the test and apply effective strategies to answer questions.</td>
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| **Materials:** | • Sample Passage and Questions from a Released Grade-Level Test for Teacher Modeling  
• Student Copies of Released Test Passage and Questions for Partner Work  
• Small Post-It Notes and Pencils  
• Chart Paper and Markers | |
| **Note:** | Teachers may wish to provide pairs of students with different passages and questions to allow for a broader review of the reading test genre. | |
| **Connection** |  
• connect today’s work with our ongoing work  
• explicitly state my teaching point | |
| | Relate a personal story about a positive test-taking experience and discuss the conditions and strategies that you used to help you successfully tackle the demands of the test. Explain that at times tests create anxiety and make it difficult for individuals to concentrate and use their best problem-solving strategies. Understanding how tests are constructed and knowing the specific strategies that help good readers and test-takers successfully navigate tests can help an individual reduce test anxiety and maximize achievement. Explain to students that soon they will soon take a practice test, which will simulate the conditions they will experience on the state standardized test in the spring. Inform students that they will encounter a variety of tests throughout their life, both formal and informal tests. To help students prepare for the upcoming practice test, the class will engage in a brief study of effective test-taking strategies that will help them effectively approach the many tests they will face throughout their studies and in life. Today, students will examine and discuss the genre features of standardized reading tests. | |
| **Teach** |  
• restate my teaching point  
• tell a personal or class story connected to the teaching point  
• demonstrate by thinking aloud & pointing out things students should have noticed | |
| | Display a copy of a passage from a released test and explain to students that good readers approach the reading of different genres by bringing what they know about the genre characteristics and the organization to establish a reading purpose. Readers can use a similar approach to help them recognize the unique features of reading tests, so that they can approach the test purposefully and with effective strategies. Remind students that the genre features are the attributes that characterize a type of literary work. Point out a couple of the obvious genre features that are part of the reading test genre. Record them on an anchor chart that is titled “Genre Features of Reading Tests.” Refer to the list of genre features found on page iv in the unit of study overview to guide students’ exploration of reading tests. | |
| **Active Engagement** |  
• ask students to be actively involved by turning and talking  
• listen, observe, &/or coach their active involvement  
• share an example of what you heard/observed | |
| | Provide students with a copy of a reading passage and the test questions as well as small sticky notes and pencils. Explain that students will examine the reading passage and questions with a partner to discover other genre features of reading tests. Tell students to look closely at the test and jot down any patterns or features that they notice on the small sticky notes. Provide students with time to examine the reading test. Listen in on student conversations and confer as needed. With the whole group, ask students to share the other attributes that they discovered about reading tests. Clarify any misconceptions, if necessary. Record the attributes onto the anchor chart. | |
| **Link** |  
• restate the teaching point  
• tell students how what you taught can be used in the future | |
| | Recap the key details that students discovered about the genre features of reading tests. Explain to students that understanding the unique genre features of reading tests will help them approach standardized tests thoughtfully and with effective strategies. | |
| **Possible Conference Questions** |  
• What patterns do you notice about the reading test passage and the questions?  
• How does knowing about the genre test features help a reader successfully navigate and approach reading tests? | |

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<th>Mini-lesson:</th>
<th>The Vocabulary of Test Talk</th>
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**Objective:**
Good readers use their knowledge of test vocabulary to help them understand directions, determine the purpose for reading passages, and understand what a question is asking them to do.

**Materials:**
- Sample Fiction & Nonfiction Passages & Questions from a Released Grade-Level Test for Teacher Modeling
- Student Copies of Released Test Passage and Questions for Partner Work
- Test-taking Vocabulary from STAAR
- Small Sticky Notes and Pencils
- Chart Paper and Markers

**Note:** Prior to the mini-lesson, create an anchor chart with the headings: Test-taking Vocabulary & Meaning/Purpose

**Connection**
- connect today’s work with our ongoing work
- explicitly state my teaching point

Relate a personal example in which your knowledge of test-taking vocabulary helped you to understand the directions for a test and to successfully navigate a test. Explain that good readers use their knowledge of test vocabulary to help them establish purposes for reading specific passages and to understand what a particular question is asking them to do. Remind students that throughout the year, they have learned specific test talk words – the language of standardized tests – that help them analyze and identify the different kinds of questions found on reading tests. Today, students will investigate the vocabulary words commonly found on standardized reading tests. A deep understanding of test talk will enhance a reader’s understanding of the test directions, and it will equip them to analyze test questions effectively and establish appropriate reading purposes.

**Teach**
- restate my teaching point
- tell a personal or class story connected to the teaching point
- demonstrate by thinking aloud & pointing out things students should have noticed

Display the sample test passage and point out a few of the general test talk words commonly found in the directions such as selection, questions, and mark the passage. Explain the importance of these words as they relate to the reading test and how they help a reader understand the directions. On an anchor chart, record the test-taking vocabulary and jot down a brief explanation for the word and/or describe its purpose in standardized tests. Remind students that understanding the genre of a passage is important, because a reader uses different strategies to make sense of the ideas in fiction rather than nonfiction. Explain how the test often states the genre in the directions and point it out on the sample passage. Students can also verify the genre by paying attention to the text features. Compare and contrast the text features of fiction and nonfiction using the sample passages. Tell students that good readers pay attention to the test talk found within the question stems. Share a sample question stem and discuss the test talk words that help readers determine what the question is asking them to do. Jot down the key words onto the anchor chart and record the meaning/purpose. Repeat this process for 1 or 2 additional questions.

**Active Engagement**
- ask students to be actively involved by turning and talking
- listen, observe, &/or coach their active involvement
- share an example of what you heard/observed

Reveal the next question stem for one of the sample passages. Ask students to turn and talk to a partner about the key test-taking word(s) found in the question stems that help them know what the question is asking them to do. Listen in on conversations and provide feedback as needed. Have students repeat the process for at least 1 additional question stem. Remind students to talk about the meaning and/or purpose of the test-taking word(s).

**Link**
- restate the teaching point
- tell students how what you taught can be used in the future

Remind students that good test-takers use their knowledge of test talk to help them successfully navigate reading tests by understanding the directions, establishing reading purposes, and determining what a question is asking them to do. Explain that during independent reading, students will work in small groups and go on a scavenger hunt for the test talk words in released test passages. Provide students with a copy of the Test-taking Vocabulary from STAAR. When students encounter the words in a passage or question stem, they should discuss the purpose of the word in the test and talk about its meaning. Students will record the words on sticky notes, along with a brief explanation of its meaning/purpose. Allow students time to look for the words with their small group. Wrap up the lesson by allowing students to share their findings with the class.

**Possible Conference Questions**
- What test-taking word(s) have you found on the test passage in the question stems?
- What is the purpose of the test-taking word? How does knowing the meaning or purpose of the word help you as a test-taker?

**Unit of Study: Good Readers Test-taking Strategies**

*Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D., Curriculum Department – Revised December 2012*
### Mini-lesson: **Activate Schema & Read for Meaning**

**Objective:**
Good readers activate schema by looking at the text features before reading a passage to determine Who and What the text is likely about.

**Materials:**
- Nonfiction Passage for Teacher Modeling (Display or Project onto Smartboard)
- Strategy Poster (optional)
- Chart paper and markers
- Nonfiction Passage for Independent Practice

**Note:** In the initial portion of the lesson, teachers may cover up the text on a passage with sticky notes to help students understand the idea of using text features to activate schema.

### Connection

- *connect today’s work with our ongoing work*
- *explicitly state my teaching point*

Describe a time when you were completely focused on a complex task. Describe the strategies you used to remain focused and discuss how it helped you finish the task. Explain to students that one thing that makes a reading text hard is that the passages are long. Tells students that sometimes readers lose focus and forget to pay attention when they are reading a long passage. As a result, readers get confused and may lose track of “Who” and “What” the passage is about. One of the things that good readers do to stay focused is that they learn a little bit about the passage before they read it. Good readers activate their schema by looking at the text features before reading a passage. Explain that text features in a passage help readers locate and pay attention to important information. Some of the most common text features in a test passage include the title, headings, bold-faced words, captions, and visuals such as photographs, diagrams, etc. By looking at the text features, readers focus on “Who” and “What” the text is likely to be about. As a result, they are likely to remember the important ideas from the passage. Also, when readers look at the title and headings, it helps them set a purpose for reading. When we know our purpose for reading a particular passage, we are more likely to stay focused on our task. Today, students will look at the pictures and words around a passage before reading to identify “Who” and “What” a passage is mostly about and to set a meaningful purpose for reading.

### Teach

- *restate my teaching point*
- *tell a personal or class story connected to the teaching point*
- *demonstrate by thinking aloud & pointing out things students should have noticed*

Display an enlarged copy of the teacher modeling passage with the grey boxes or one with sticky notes covering the text. Explain that you are going to look at the test passage, but you are not going to read it right now. Tell students that you will pick out the important information by looking at the pictures and the words around the passage. Ask students to watch as you look at the title, headings, visuals, and other text features to learn the “Who” and “What” of the passage. Use a think aloud process as you notice the different features. On chart paper, make a t-chart with the headings “Who” and “What.” Record information that you learn from the passage on the chart. Draw students’ attention to the key words by repeating “Who” and “What” the passage appears to be mostly about. Model the process with a few of the different text features found in the passage. Discuss a purpose for reading the passage based on the title and headings. Model how to read the passage by periodically stopping to think about the ideas found in the text related to the “Who” and “What the passage” is about.

### Active Engagement

- *ask students to be actively involved by turning and talking*
- *listen, observe, &/or coach their active involvement*
- *share an example of what you heard/observed*

Provide students with the nonfiction passage that they will use to practice the strategy of activating schema and reading for meaning. Ask students to notice the text features. Then have them turn and talk to a partner by describing any details that a text feature provides them with regarding the “Who” and the “What” of the passage. Listen in on student conversations and confer as needed. Debrief with the whole group and point out the key words that appear to be repeated. Repeat the guided practice for the remaining text features in the passage. Next, ask students to determine a reading purpose based upon the title and headings. Have them share their purpose with a partner.

### Link

- *restate the teaching point*
- *tell students how what you taught can be used in the future*

Remind students that they can use these strategies any time they are beginning to read a new passage to help them better understand Who or What a passage is about and to set a purpose for reading. Recap the importance of activating schema by previewing a passage’s text features and reading for meaning using the key points on the strategy poster.

1. Look at the title, headings, illustrations, bold-text, and other text features in a passage before reading.
2. Determine WHO the main character or topic is by noticing repeating names or subjects.
3. Decide WHAT the main character or topic does.
4. Read for meaning and “fun” by looking for text evidence to support the WHO and the WHAT of the passage.

### Independent Reading

Have students read the passage for the purpose that they established. Remind them to stop and think about the ideas periodically in their head as they read the passage. After students read the passage, have them turn and talk to a partner about the Who and What of the passage. Listen in on the conversations and provide coaching as needed. Recap the important ideas by sharing what the passage was mostly about and discussing how the strategy helped the reader understand the passage’s ideas.

### Possible Conference Questions

- Who and what does the passage appear to be about? What text features did you use to determine this?
- How does previewing the text features in a passage help you create a purpose for reading?

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*Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D., Curriculum Department – Revised December 2012*
### Mini-lesson: Making a Plan: Chunk, Picture, & Summarize

**Objective:**

Good readers stop after reading chunks of text to think about the ideas and summarize them.

**Materials:**

- Nonfiction Passage for Teacher Modeling that includes few, if any, headings
- Strategy Poster (Display or Project onto Smartboard)
- Chart paper and markers
- Nonfiction Passage and Questions for Independent Practice

### Connection

- **connect today’s work with our ongoing work**
- **explicitly state my teaching point**

Compare and contrast two different occasions in which successful planning and poor planning impacted you. Discuss the positive and negative consequences of each situation. Explain to students that good readers approach a passage with a thoughtful plan in mind, which helps them adequately prepare for the task. By breaking a longer passage into chunks, they can stop and think carefully about what they’ve read to make sure they understand it. When readers stop and picture what’s happening in a section of text, they are better able to summarize and remember the important ideas in the whole passage. Today, students will work on breaking the passage into smaller chunks, picturing what’s happening in the text, and summarizing the chunk of text.

### Teach

- **restate my teaching point**
- **tell a personal or class story connected to the teaching point**
- **demonstrate by thinking aloud & pointing out things students should have noticed**

Display an enlarged copy of the nonfiction passage for teacher modeling. Recap the work from the previous lessons by reminding students that they have learned strategies to activate their schema by looking over the text features found in a passage. Tell students that some passages are easily broken down into smaller chunks, because they have headings for different sections of texts. Other times, readers need to make a careful plan based on how much they think they can read at a time before they need to stop and summarize what they have read. Use a think aloud process and model how you activate schema by looking over the title of the news article as well as the photo and caption. Then tell students the process that you will use to divide the text into smaller sections. Place a mark at the end of each section of text to show where you will stop. For modeling purposes, choosing to read two longer paragraphs at a time may be appropriate. Vary your decision-making process based upon the length of the paragraphs and/or sections of text. Remind students that even though you have identified stopping points, good readers know that they may need to stop and use their fix-up strategies whenever they encounter a confusing part in the text. Next, read the first section of text and model how you monitor your comprehension. At the end of the section, tell students that you are going to picture what you’ve read in your head. Describe the images that you made as you read. Remind students that you just need to tell/record the main idea of the chunk of text. Otherwise, you will have trouble remembering the most important ideas. Model how to summarize this section of text by thinking about the Who and What the chunk of text is mostly about. For some students, it may help them to draw a simple visual and/or record the key words found in the section of text. Continue this process with 1 or 2 more sections of text.

### Active Engagement

- **ask students to be actively involved by turning and talking**
- **listen, observe, &/or coach their active involvement**
- **share an example of what you heard/observed**

Ask students to try out the strategy out on the next section of text. Remind them to read the chunk of text, picture what they have read, and summarize the important ideas. Then have them turn and talk to a partner by describing the pictures that they formed in their mind and how they would summarize it. Have them record the key words or draw a visual to summarize the section of text. Listen in on student conversations and confer as needed. Debrief with the whole group. Repeat the guided practice for the remaining sections of text.

### Link

- **restate the teaching point**
- **tell students how what you taught can be used in the future**

Tell students that they can use the process of chunking, picturing, and summarizing text to help them remember the most important ideas that they read in a long passage. Revisit the process of chunking, picturing, and summarizing text by reviewing the strategy poster.

1. Split a passage into smaller chunks by paragraphs or sections of text.
2. After reading a chunk of text, stop and picture the ideas in your mind.
3. Summarize each chunk of text by thinking about the WHO and the WHAT before moving onto the next chunk.
4. Use the summaries to help you look for text support when answering the questions.

### Independent Reading

Tell students that during independent reading, they will continue to apply the strategies that they have learned about effective test taking. If time permits, revisit the strategies that students learned in previous lessons using the teacher modeling passage. Model how to determine the key words in question stems, reread a passage and locate text evidence, analyze questions and determine a probable answer, and eliminate answer choices by sorting them into categories – “definitely wrong” and “maybe right.” Then allow time for students to apply those same strategies on a practice passage.

### Possible Conference Questions

- Tell me about your plan. What process did you use to break the passage into meaningful chunks of text?
- What strategies are you using to visualize and summarize the text?

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**Unit of Study: Good Readers Test-taking Strategies**

*Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D., Curriculum Department – Revised December 2012*
## Mini-lesson: Identify Key Phrases in Question Stems & Read to Find Text Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective:</th>
<th>Good readers identify and use key phrases found in question stems to help them locate text evidence for answering the questions to a passage.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Materials: | - Nonfiction Passage and Questions for Teacher Modeling (Display or Project on Smartboard)  
- Strategy Poster (optional)  
- Chart paper and markers  
- Nonfiction Passage and Questions for Independent Practice |

### Connection
- connect today’s work with our ongoing work  
- explicitly state my teaching point

Describe a time when you were separated from a family member or friend in a store or public place. Discuss your initial feelings of not being able to find them and share the strategies that you used to scan the crowd in search of the individual (e.g., looking for distinguishing features or clothing). Explain that we can use these same processes of close study to help us locate important information in a passage. Tell students that good readers and test-takers carefully examine the questions for key words to help them know what text evidence to look for in a passage. After determining what a question is asking and identifying the key phrases, good readers can separate the important details from those that are not as important. Explain that when good readers are looking for text evidence, they use the key phrases to locate places in the passage where they are likely to find information to prove or disprove answer choices. Today, students will identify key phrases in question stems and use them to locate text evidence they need to prove or disprove an answer.

### Teach
- restate my teaching point  
- tell a personal or class story connected to the teaching point  
- demonstrate by thinking aloud & pointing out things students should have noticed

Display an enlarged copy of the teacher modeling questions without the answer choices. Remind students that when they scan the questions, they ignore the answer choices. Three out of 4 of the answer choices are incorrect, so it is not a good use of time to look at wrong answers that may confuse them. Tell students that they will look for key words in the question stems and think about what the question is asking them to do. Ask students to pay attention as you model how to identify key phrases in the question stems. Use a think aloud process to explain how you are determining the key word(s) in question 1 and discuss what it is asking you to do. Point out that the main topic of the passage may be mentioned in the question stem. Explain that since the passage is mainly about this topic it shouldn’t be a key phrase, since it will appear several times throughout the text. (For example, if the passage is about dogs, then the word “dogs” would appear several times in the article, and it should not be marked as a key word.) Next, record the key phrase and question type for the first question on chart paper. Model the same process and explain your thinking for question 2. Add the key phrase to the chart. Find an example of a main idea or summary question. Explain that some questions are general such as main idea, summary, or author purpose questions. These kinds of questions do not have key phrases, so a different kind of strategy is used to answer the question. Tell students that you will not underline any key phrases in those kinds of questions, because they are too general.

### Active Engagement
- ask students to be actively involved by turning and talking  
- listen, observe, & coach their active involvement  
- share an example of what you heard/observed

Display an enlarged copy of the teacher modeling questions without the answer choices. Remind students that when they scan the questions, they ignore the answer choices. Three out of 4 of the answer choices are incorrect, so it is not a good use of time to look at wrong answers that may confuse them. Tell students that they will look for key words in the question stems and think about what the question is asking them to do. Ask students to pay attention as you model how to identify key phrases in the question stems. Use a think aloud process to explain how you are determining the key word(s) in question 1 and discuss what it is asking you to do. Point out that the main topic of the passage may be mentioned in the question stem. Explain that since the passage is mainly about this topic it shouldn’t be a key phrase, since it will appear several times throughout the text. (For example, if the passage is about dogs, then the word “dogs” would appear several times in the article, and it should not be marked as a key word.) Next, record the key phrase and question type for the first question on chart paper. Model the same process and explain your thinking for question 2. Add the key phrase to the chart. Find an example of a main idea or summary question. Explain that some questions are general such as main idea, summary, or author purpose questions. These kinds of questions do not have key phrases, so a different kind of strategy is used to answer the question. Tell students that you will not underline any key phrases in those kinds of questions, because they are too general.

### Link
- restate the teaching point  
- tell students how what you taught can be used in the future

Remind students that they can use the strategy of scanning question stems to identify key phrases any time they are answering questions about a passage. This process will help them decide what’s important in the text when they look for evidence in the text to answer the questions. Revisit the strategy of identifying key phrases in the question stems by examining the strategy poster:

1. Underline key phrases in the question stems.  
2. Revise key phrases as the main topic of a passage is revealed by repeating words.  
3. Use another strategy for general questions that do not have key phrases.  
4. Read the passage and mark the key phrases in the text.

### Independent Reading

Have students read the question stems, identify the key words, and determine the question type for the student practice passage. Before rereading the passage, have students turn and talk to a partner about the key words they identified. Listen in on the conversations and provide coaching as needed. Then ask students to reread the passage and mark the key words in the text. Recap the process that students used to find text evidence and discuss how it will help them answer the questions.

### Possible Conference Questions
- What process did you use to determine the key phrase in the question?  
- How does reading around the key phrase in the passage for text clues help you answer questions?
**Mini-lesson: Predict & Eliminate Answer Choices**

**Objective:**
Good readers use text evidence to think about the answer to a question in their head, and they eliminate answer choices that are definitely incorrect.

**Materials:**
- Nonfiction Passage and Questions for Teacher Modeling (Display or Project on Smartboard)
- Strategy Poster (optional)
- Chart paper and markers
- Nonfiction Passage and Questions for Independent Practice

**Note:** Cover up the answer choices to the questions with sticky notes, etc. This will allow for teacher modeling and student practice of thinking about an answer to a question before looking at the answer choices.

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**Connection**
- connect today’s work with our ongoing work
- explicitly state my teaching point

Tell students that smart test-takers use a variety of tools to help them answer different kinds of questions. What works for one kind of question, may not work for another kind of question. Explain that test makers often write incorrect answers that can fool you if you are not careful. Sometimes you might be tempted to change your answer, and later you might discover that you were right the first time. By thinking about the best answer to a question before you read the answer choices, you won’t be easily fooled into picking a tricky wrong answer choice. Sometimes, however, we need a little more help in figuring out the correct answer. By sorting answer choices into two categories – “definitely wrong” and “maybe right” – we can eliminate answer choices and act strategically in determining the best answer. Today, students will work on thinking about the answer to a question before they read all the answer choices, and they will sort the answer choices into two categories to help them identify the best answer choice.

**Teach**
- restate my teaching point
- tell a personal or class story connected to the teaching point
- demonstrate by thinking aloud & pointing out things students should have noticed

Display an enlarged copy of the teacher modeling passage and questions. Recap the work that students did in the previous lesson by summarizing the passage’s important ideas. Explain that students will watch as you model how to determine a probable answer to a question by using text evidence in the passage before you look at any of the answer choices. Model the process for question 1 and cover up the answer choices. Point out the importance of covering up the answer choices. By hiding them, you don’t get distracted by any tricky, wrong answer choices. Use the text evidence you marked in the passage to help you “predict” the best answer to the question. Record your prediction on chart paper so that you can compare it to the answer choices. Remind students that as you read each answer choice, you will compare them to your answer and sort them into two categories – “definitely wrong” and “maybe right.” Read each answer choice, sort them into the categories, share your thinking, and cross out answer choices that are definitely wrong. Remind students that even though the words in an answer choice can be found in the text, that does not necessarily make it the correct answer choice. Wrong answer choices can be too narrow, untrue, too extreme, or do not answer the question. After you have identified the correct answer through the process of elimination, return to the passage and use the evidence markers to confirm your ‘maybe right’ answer. Explain that even when you think you have found the correct answer, good readers read all of the answer choices to make sure they are correct. Repeat this same process for another question or two.

**Active Engagement**
- ask students to be actively involved by turning and talking
- listen, observe, &/or coach their active involvement
- share an example of what you heard/observed

Ask students to try out the strategy by “predicting” the answer for the next question. They should record their answer on a sticky note. Then have them turn and talk to a partner about their prediction. Listen in on student conversations and confer as needed. Make sure students are using their evidence markers to confirm their predictions. Next, ask them to review the answer choices to the question and determine which answer choice is correct by comparing their prediction with the choices. Have them work with their partner to sort the answer choices into those that are “definitely wrong” or “maybe right.” Listen in on student conversations and confer as needed. Debrief with the whole group. Repeat the guided practice for the remaining questions.

**Link**
- restate the teaching point
- tell students how what you taught can be used in the future

Tell students that they can predict the answer to a question by covering up the answer choices, which will help them avoid choosing an incorrect, tricky answer choice. Also, they can compare their answer to the answer choices and sort them into two categories – “definitely wrong,” “maybe right.” Revisit the process of predicting an answer to a question with the strategy poster. If students are having trouble with using this strategy, point them back to the strategy poster to help them sort their answer choices into two categories.

1. Restate a question in your own words to determine what it is asking.
2. Think about the answer to the question using text evidence in the passage.
3. Look at all the answer choices and sort them into the categories – “definitely wrong” and “maybe right.”
4. Match your predicted answer and text evidence to the correct answer choice.

**Independent Reading**
Have students apply the same process to the independent practice passage and questions. Confer with students as they work. After students have completed their work, discuss the problem-solving process that they used to determine the best answer choice.

**Possible Conference Questions**
- Why is important for you to form an answer to a question in your mind before looking at the answer choices?
- What evidence in the text supports your “predicted” answer?
- How does sorting the answer choices into two categories help you determine the correct answer?
**Test-taking Vocabulary from STAAR**

**Appendix A**

**Note:** This is not an exhaustive list of vocabulary found on reading tests, but it includes some of the common terms found on standardized reading tests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Vocabulary</th>
<th>Genre Forms &amp; Text Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ No. 2 pencil</td>
<td>□ story/article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ selection / passage</td>
<td>□ letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ question</td>
<td>□ journal entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ sentence</td>
<td>□ report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ paragraph</td>
<td>□ title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ mark the space</td>
<td>□ photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ answer choice</td>
<td>□ heading</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Stems</th>
<th>Graphic Organizers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ opposite / same</td>
<td>□ chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ before / after</td>
<td>□ web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ problem / solution</td>
<td>□ diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ resolves the conflict</td>
<td>□ list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ event</td>
<td>□ notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ mostly / mainly about / main message / theme</td>
<td>□ time line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ summary</td>
<td>□ outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ feeling / mood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ author’s purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ because / reason</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ probably</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ from the information</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ the reader can tell / infer / inference</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>□ statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ represent</td>
<td>□ sentence supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ common</td>
<td>□ relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ alike / different</td>
<td>□ determine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ similarity / difference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ author organizes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ detail supports the conclusion / conclude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ imagery / figurative language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ dictionary entry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ definition</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Classifying Test Questions
Appendix B

Word Meaning

Important Details

Main Idea

Summary

Character Analysis

Plot, Setting, & Problem

Sequence

Author and Text Purpose

Inference

Unit of Study: Good Readers Test-taking Strategies
Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D., Curriculum Department – Revised December 2012
Word Meaning

- Which words from the paragraph help the reader know what the word ___ means?
- What does the word ___ meaning in paragraph ___?
- In paragraph ___, the word ___ means –
- Read the dictionary entry below for the word ___. Which definition best fits the meaning of the word ___ as it is used in paragraph ___ of this selection?

These questions ask you to find the meaning of words or phrases. The questions always include WORD or MEAN(S)/MEANING.