

Teaching Students to Monitor for Meaning

Monitoring is important for readers of all levels. Good readers consistently monitor for meaning. The errors that good readers make usually have no impact on the understanding of the text and comprehension is not compromised.

Some readers do not monitor for meaning. They might make a mistake yet continue to read even when what they are reading does not make sense. Errors are often made on known words. When this happens the student is probably not listening to what he or she is reading. **Students have to be taught to monitor their reading.**

The following are suggestions for teaching the process of monitoring during guided reading:

Step 1: Model the process – Read a portion of text and make an error that changes the meaning. Stop and say, “What I just read didn’t make any sense. I need to go back and fix it.”

Step 2: Share the process – Tell the students you are going to make a mistake and you want them to find it. Read another portion of text while the students follow along in their books. Again, make a mistake but continue reading to the end of the sentence. Then say, “Did you notice my mistake? Did it make sense? What should I do?”

Step 3: Scaffold the process – Give each student several Post-it flags. Tell them to listen to themselves as they read and place a flag where they monitored their reading. No writing is needed. Students should read and find places where they made a mistake but fixed it. As students read, “listen in” to individuals to check on their monitoring of errors that changes the meaning of the text. When an error is made, allow the student to read to the end of the sentence to see if he/she notices the error. If the student does not appear to notice the error, say, “Did that make sense? Can you find the tricky part and fix it?” Praise students for stopping and monitoring for meaning, even if the error is not fixed. Just the fact that they are stopping and thinking about their reading is important.

Important Guidelines for teaching monitoring

1. You must let some errors go. If you attend to every mistake, the student will slow down in order to be more accurate and likely ignore the meaning of the text. If the error does not interfere with the meaning of the passage, ignore the error. It is not the accuracy that makes a good reader; it is comprehension.
2. Do not expect the students to fix every error. The goal is for students to monitor (or stop) when reading does not make sense. Students may lack the decoding strategies to fix the error on their own. When this happens, praise the student for noticing the error and then prompt for an appropriate decoding strategy that will help the student solve the word.