

Using relevant prior knowledge or Schemas

While reading information texts skilled readers are able to spontaneously and purposefully recall their relevant, prior knowledge (schema) before, during, and after they read and learn (text to self connections). They use their schema to make sense of new information they read and learn and to store new information with related information in memory.

Skilled readers assimilate information from text and other learning experiences into their relevant, prior knowledge and make changes in that schema to accommodate the new information.

Skilled readers capitalize on four types of schema for comprehending a text:

- * Specific knowledge about the topic; general world knowledge and experience (text to world connections);
- * Specific knowledge about text structure, organization (text to text connections),
- * Knowledge about one's own reading process and barriers to comprehension
- * Specific knowledge about the author/illustrator.

Each type of schema permits young readers to monitor for meaning, pose questions, make predictions, draw conclusions, create mental images, synthesize, and determine importance as they read and learn.

Teachers need to however assist all readers, especially non skilled readers to:

a) *Activate their relevant schemas:* by providing them with opportunities to recall relevant, prior knowledge before the reading begins.

b) *Build new schemas:* by actually creating / providing background knowledge on a given topic, author, text structure if the readers are not likely to already have it.

K-W-L: An approach for activating and building schema

Procedure:

a) The first step in this approach is **K**, which helps each reader to access *what I know*. The teachers write the topic on the board and the students brainstorm what they know about it. These are written on the board. Next, the students are encouraged to develop categories for the ideas they have brain stormed.

b) The second step is **W** for helping each reader to determine what I *want to learn*. In this step, the students are encouraged to create questions about what they want to learn about the topic they agree going to read about and are asked to write down the ones that interest them the most.

c) The final step is step **L** to help each reader recall *what I did learn* as a result of reading. In this step, the students write or discuss what they have learned with specific attention to their original questions.

Note: There may be some questions from part 2 i.e. **W**, which do not get answered. It is important to discuss how and where the children can find the answers to these.