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OPPORTUNITIES FOR USING

*The*  
**Reading Strategies**  
*Book*

as a **SUPPLEMENT** to a **BASAL READING SERIES**



*Dear Teachers,*

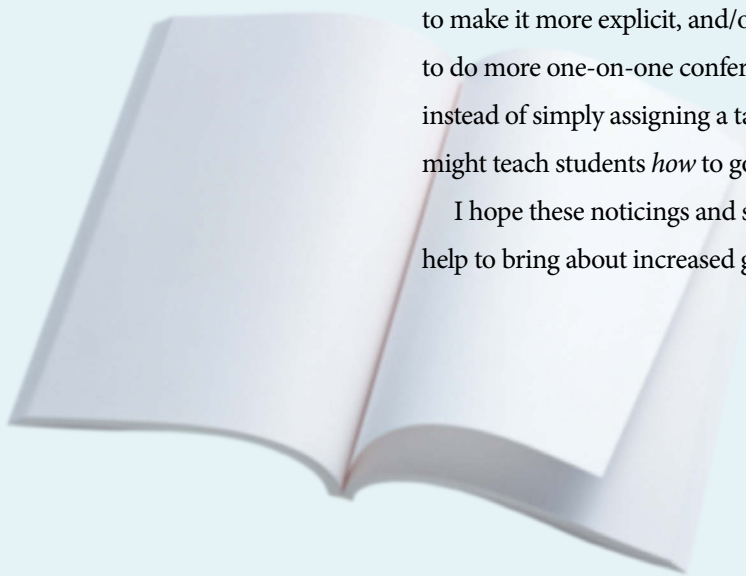
I've noticed that many teachers are using *The Reading Strategies Book* alongside scripted reading programs/reading series/basal readers. Some of you have written to me for advice on how and when to use strategies from *The Reading Strategies Book* for whole-group, small-group, and/or individual instruction. I come from a reader's workshop background and am less familiar with core reading programs. So I decided to sit down with a student book and teacher's guide from one basal-reader series in an effort to learn how they are organized, what sorts of work they ask students to do, and the types of texts that students will encounter. With that understanding, I thought I could offer some helpful tips on ways to bring the strategies in *The Reading Strategies Book* into your literacy block alongside the program you use. I want to be clear that I'm not suggesting that you go out and purchase a basal reading program, nor am I endorsing the use of such a program. I'm simply offering this help to those of you in districts or schools that expect you to use the reading series materials they provide.

From my exploration, I found many opportunities for offering students more explicit strategies, like the ones in *The Reading Strategies Book*, and lots of opportunities to provide differentiation beyond what a teacher's guide suggests. This means that although you may still choose to follow the general scope and sequence of the reading program, use some or all of the teacher demonstration texts and student texts, and/or use some or all of the questions and tasks the resource suggests, there are places where you can differentiate more in order to better meet student needs. For example, I offer ideas for how you can step aside from the basal for ten minutes while students are working independently to pull together a small group, change the language of a lesson to make it more explicit, and/or consider adding in some free-choice reading as a place to do more one-on-one conferences. In many instances, I found myself suggesting that instead of simply assigning a task, activity, or question as a teacher's guide suggests, you might teach students *how* to go about doing it. That's where strategies come in.

I hope these noticings and suggestions are helpful to you, and above all that that they help to bring about increased growth in your students!

*Best,*

*Jennifer Serravallo*





## Opportunities for Using *The Reading Strategies Book* as a Supplement to a Basal Reading Series

### What I notice when examining reading program materials (teacher's guide and student book):

#### **Enriching tasks with strategy instruction**

The book gives students directions for a task to complete (e.g., in one series' first-grade book, students are directed to "... mark up your text. Highlight details, add notes and questions, add words to your word list."):

### Advice I might give to a teacher using these materials along with *The Reading Strategies Book* (RSB)

Although the book tells students what to do, it doesn't tell students how. Using *RSB*, think first about what category from the hierarchy (see page 3) the task connects to (for example, "highlight details" corresponds to "key details" in *RSB*). Then, search for strategies that match the level of text complexity. Once you've found appropriate strategies, you can teach them to the whole class, small groups, or individuals who need support with the task.

#### **Supplementing phonics and phonemic awareness lessons with strategies**

Phonics/phonemic awareness lessons and activities

To ensure students aren't viewing these exercises as isolated skills, it's important to teach them to explicitly transfer what they learn to real reading contexts. Chapter 3 of *RSB* is filled with "Print Work" strategies. Search through the chapter for strategies that connect to the phonics lessons, and then use those strategies to teach students how to apply their phonics knowledge to their reading.

## What I notice in the basal materials

### **Supporting vocabulary development**

Within passages, there are often key vocabulary words identified for students to know. Sometimes the words are highlighted and sometimes a definition is provided.

### **Using strategies when graphic organizers are offered**

Target skills are often identified for students (for example, “Main Idea and Details”). These terms are then defined in the student book, and readers are given a graphic organizer format to use when writing main ideas and details.

## How to incorporate *Reading Strategies*

To truly understand new vocabulary, students should be taught to go beyond simple definitions. Also, simply placing words in a context does not mean students will understand how to get the meaning from the context. Many of the strategies in the “Vocabulary” chapter of *RSB* (Chapter 11) will help you show students how to determine the meaning of new words.

Each time a skill is articulated, you can find help in *RSB* for how to break down that skill into strategies. Students often need the explicit “how to” of a strategy in order to take on the challenging work of a skill.

Graphic organizers help students to organize information, but knowing which information to put in the organizer often requires more explanation. The strategies and correlating prompts in *RSB* can help show students how to sort through all the information in their books to provide the important information for the organizer.

## What I notice in the basal materials

### **Offering strategies to support completion of performance tasks**

Students are asked to complete performance tasks at the end of a chapter.

## How to incorporate *Reading Strategies*

After reading the student performance task, think about what skills students would need to employ in order to answer the question with the right types of detail and the right amount of detail. As you look over the student performance task, try to identify which of these skills students are demonstrating and which they need support with. As you move into the next chapter/unit in the guide, consider pulling together some small groups to teach students strategies for the skills with which they need more practice.

### **Supporting student collaboration and conversation**

The student book will often direct students to work in collaboration with others. For example students may be asked to do a “think-pair-share,” have a class discussion using provided questions as springboards, or “turn and talk” using new words they’ve learned—and in all cases to give details and explain their ideas clearly.

Conversing with others will not come naturally to all students, and having a true dialogue is more than just taking turns sharing one quick thought. In the “Conversations” chapter of *RSB* (Chapter 12), you can look at a list of speaking and listening skills to assess as students talk in partnerships, groups, or as a whole class. Then, target strategies within the chapter to support students in deepening conversation beyond just quick shares. Consider using visual scaffolds, such as the classroom charts recommended in Chapter 12, that students can refer to for a reminder of the strategies they’ve learned to improve conversation.

## What I notice in the basal materials

### **Teaching students *how* to answer questions (not just telling them to do so)**

Students need to answer questions on their own. For example, after reading a passage, they may be asked to independently define the main idea of a given section of text.

### **Improving students' fluency**

In a fluency lesson, the teacher's guide may instruct the teacher to coach students to connect words to read them smoothly and accurately.

## How to incorporate *Reading Strategies*

In places where students are asked to answer a question, you can find strategies in *RSB* to support them with *how* to answer the question. First, figure out what type of question it is. The example to the left is a main-idea question. Then, find strategies that work with the level of text complexity of the passage to support students with steps to follow in order to answer the question. The prompts that connect to each strategy and the visual supports (charts, tools, student work exemplars) included in *RSB* can also be sources of support.

For many students, some explicit instruction for *how* to do this, and a model with a visual such as an anchor chart, could help them to practice more independently. You can first identify what fluency skill students are asked to practice, and then use the margin notes in *RSB* to find strategies to make the teaching clearer. The language you may use while coaching readers can be found in the "prompts" section of each strategy page in *RSB*. If possible, splitting students into smaller groups and giving them a chance to practice the same skills on self-selected independent reading books will allow you more time to coach and provide feedback for individual students.



## What I notice in the basal materials

### **Transferring skills across genres**

Each lesson focuses on a different genre—for example, expository nonfiction may be followed by biography, which is followed by a fictional piece. This requires students to switch from one genre to another within short periods of time after just one text.


### **Helping students manage text-dense pages**

The pages in the student book are filled with information—a collection of text features, such as photographs and callout boxes, as well as running text.

## How to incorporate *Reading Strategies*

Switching genres requires switching gears. Although students may use the same skills (e.g., visualizing) they will employ different strategies (e.g., using their senses to imagine the setting in fiction versus using photograph captions to help them add more details beyond what is in the picture in nonfiction). In *RSB*, you'll find three chapters to help students comprehend fictional texts (Chapters 5, 6, and 7), three chapters to support students with informational texts (Chapters 8, 9, and 10), and one chapter to help students with vocabulary and figurative language (Chapter 11). Each strategy is tagged with a specific genre to help you see the type of text with which it will work best. When working in these different genres across a basal reading series, try to notice which skills students need support with—in many cases, it will be beyond just what the teacher's guide directs you to pay attention to. Then, as students work independently, pull together small groups and individual students to teach targeted strategies to support them.

Many students can use support navigating the pages and getting the most information from the different parts of the text. Using strategies from the "Text Features" chapter of *RSB* (Chapter 10) will be a support to students who aren't able to digest all the information on pages that are text-feature-dense or busy.



## What I notice in the basal materials

### **Supporting student collaboration and conversation**

Every few lessons, students are asked to read independently from books they self-select.

### **Scaffolding the reading of complex texts**

The level of the texts students are reading is very challenging—sometimes above grade level.

## How to incorporate *Reading Strategies*

As students read independently, this is a perfect opportunity to return to strategies that individual students need help with, and to match strategies to individual student goals. These goals may align to the sorts of goals you've had in your whole-class lessons so far, or they may be other goals that you've noticed students may need support with based on how they've responded to various tasks (e.g., speaking with a partner, answering comprehension questions, reading out loud with fluency and accuracy). Use strategies from *RSB* as you work on individual goals in one-on-one conferences or in small groups.

While students read, watch them. Sometimes you'll discover some students who could use support with their focus, stamina, or overall engagement for independent reading. You'll find strategies in Chapter 2 of *RSB* to support those students.

Strategies are always helpful, but especially so when texts are complex. As students attempt to read texts independently, take note of what types of reading work pose a challenge to them. Decoding the words? Reading with fluency? Comprehending? Writing about reading? Find the chapter in *RSB* that connects to the support students need, and search for a strategy that matches the level of complexity of the text they are working to read.