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Teaching of Inference Making in the Adolescent Classroom

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Research Questions

- How do I encourage students to think critically about fiction texts in regards to making inferences?
- How can I use scaffolded strategies to help students infer implicit meanings from fiction texts?

Methodology

- Participants: 24, fifth grade students from a large school district
- Data Sources: Field notes and student assessments
- Subject: English Language Arts

Literature Review

- The use of nontraditional texts in the classroom allows for students to access their particular learning styles (Shannahan, 2013).
- According to Lucking (1976), teachers use scaffolded questioning techniques to encourage students to develop upon the explicit meanings of texts.
- Some students are not accessing their background knowledge (Nokes, 2008).
- Students are unable to access new information that can be linked to relevant background knowledge for comprehension (Elbro, 2013).
- According to Levine (2002), peer friendships and interactions are valued in the cognitive development stage of adolescence.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

- Positive student responses to scaffolded questioning techniques were supported through analysis of field notes.
- Field notes pointed towards effective group and peer collaboration in enhancing inference making abilities.
- The use of nontraditional texts increased student engagement and performance.
- Reminders of inference making techniques and strategies are necessary in helping students stray from the normal question and answer process.
- Scaffolded and additional questioning improved students’ performance on assessments.
- Activating prior knowledge engages students in the text and hence involves higher order thinking skills.

CONCLUSION

- Findings suggest that students benefit from both verbal and written scaffolded questioning in response to assessment questions requiring inference making.
- An array of tools aids students in recognizing inference making in traditional texts.
- Further study is required in the development over time of students’ ability to respond to inference making assessments.