

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Office of Curriculum and Instruction

The C&I Guide: Instructional Strategies for PSSA and TerraNova Success 2005

K – 8 Literacy

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Inside every student is a brilliant child.

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**The C & I Guide of Instructional Strategies
for PSSA and TerraNova Success**

Here are three instructional strategies that are also test-taking strategies. Teach and use the strategies over the next 6 weeks as students read and respond to reading. There are 2 reading strategies and 1 writing strategy:

1. Talk Across Your Fingers
2. Prefix Charts (which address the PDE eligible content)
3. Graphic Organizer for Narrative Writing

Once students learn these strategies, they should use them throughout the year. These strategies will become second nature to students and will be an excellent resource for them when they take the PSSA and TerraNova Assessments.

Talk Across Your Fingers:

Good readers don't remember everything they read. Good readers use strategies to hold on to their thinking so they can return to it later. Students must learn to use strategies for support when they must justify their thinking after reading. A good strategy is an intentional plan that readers use to help themselves make sense of their reading. The most effective strategies are flexible and can be adjusted to meet the demands of different tasks. PSSA and TerraNova questions often require students to think about a passage that has been read and recall and consider the most important information. Teaching students to use the **Talk Across Your Fingers** strategy insures that they know a flexible strategy that they can adjust to meet several different reading tasks.

The ability to cite evidence is a required skill on all sections of the PSSA and TerraNova assessments. When students learn to cite evidence using the **Talk Across Your Finger** strategy they learn to use many strategies good readers use.

- They reread with a purpose
- They organize and integrate new information
- They make critical decisions about what's important
- They distinguish between essential information and the unnecessary information
- They accurately summarize parts of a text
- They reflect on what was read

Description: Students keep their content focused by using the fingers on one hand to count and limit what they say and/or write.

Purpose: Students learn to tell what is important without telling too much. Students learn to revisit the text to cite specific evidence in response to a question.

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Appropriate grade: Talk Across Your Fingers can be used at every grade from K to 8. As the text increases in complexity, so too, should the response.

Uses:

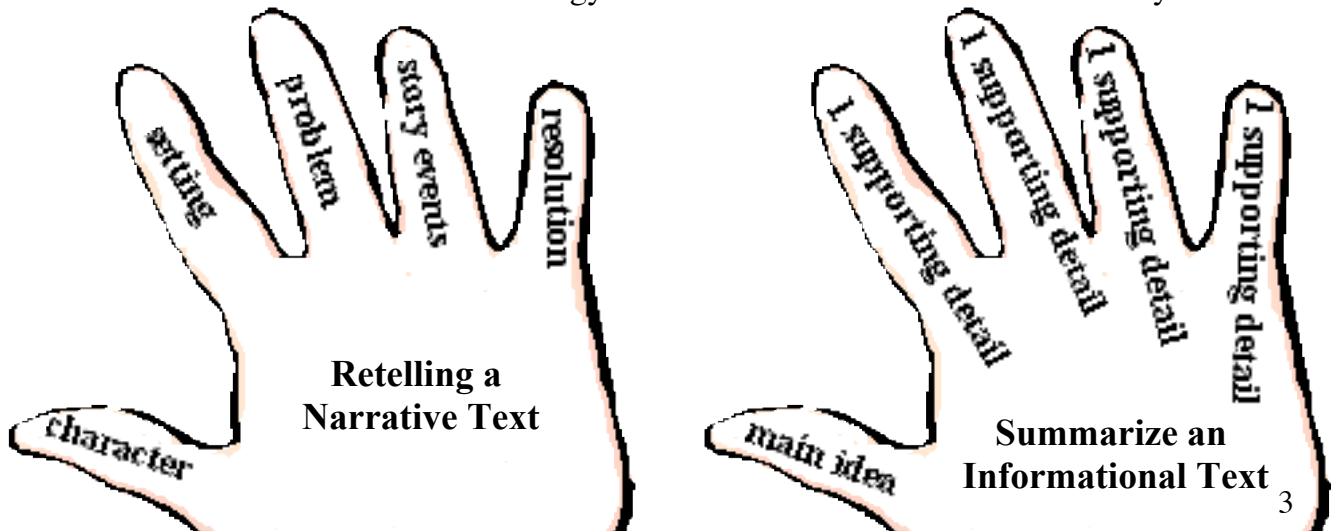
- **Retelling a Narrative Text**
Thumb – character
Finger – setting
Finger – problem
Finger – story events
Finger – resolution

- **Summarize an Informational Text**
Thumb – main idea
Finger – 1 supporting detail
Finger – 1 supporting detail
Finger – 1 supporting detail
Finger - 1 supporting detail

- **Describing a character, a setting, or a plot**
Thumb – main idea
Each finger – a supporting detail

- **Answering a “What do you think” question**
Thumb – my opinion
Each finger – a place in text that supports my opinion

Suggestion: As you teach each use of the **Talk Across Your Fingers** strategy, make a poster with a giant hand to hang in the classroom. Write the prompts on each finger. Refer to it often so it becomes a strategy that students use with ease and accuracy.



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Prefix Charts

Using the Prefix to decode unknown words and determine meaning:

When we speak, we make additions to base words that add meaning. We add clusters to the beginning of words, called prefixes. Prefixes are letter groups added before a base word or root. Prefixes generally add to or change the meaning of the word.

Understanding the meaning of a prefix is a great advantage to students when they encounter them in reading or want to use them in writing. In fact, combining root words with a large variety of prefixes will enable them to effectively understand many words.

The state-released eligible content for PSSA has detailed which prefixes students should learn:

Grade 3 and 4: re, pre, in, un, dis, mis, non

Grade 5 and 6: re, pre, dis, mis, non, inter, extra, post, super, sub

Grade 7 and 8: pre, dis, mis, non, inter, extra, post, super, sub, bi, co, anti, mal, semi, trans

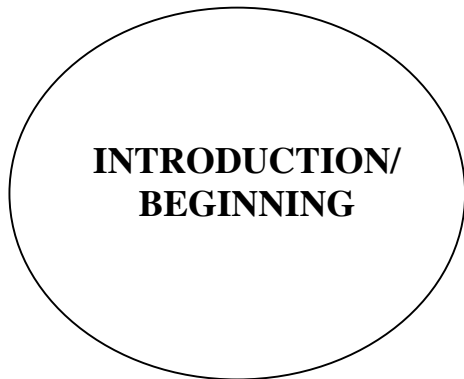
Teaching Suggestion: Introduce one prefix at a time by explaining the meaning of the prefix and demonstrating how it changes the meaning in familiar words. Create a chart for the prefix. For example,

re means again
rewrite – to write again
review – to look again
replay – to play again

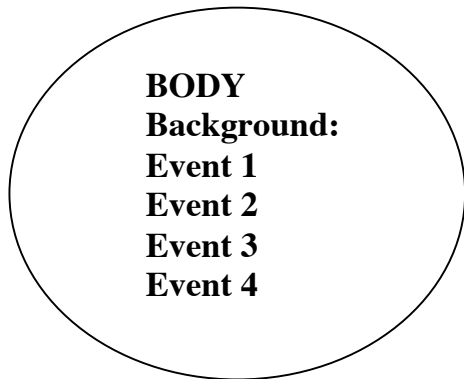
Throughout the year students can add words to the chart as they discover them in their daily reading and writing.

Graphic Organizer for Narrative Writing

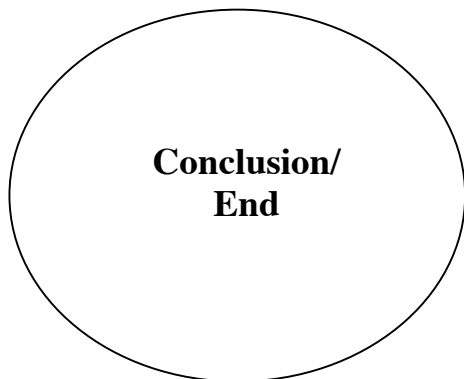
Graphic organizers support students as they plan and organize their thoughts. Repeated teacher modeling and student use of graphic organizers will help students tell a story in chronological order and include interesting detail and description.



Introduction of characters and setting



Development of Plot and Conflict



Resolution and Reflection

The purpose of a narrative piece is to tell a story in chronological order that is interesting, provides good detail and description, clearly expresses the writer’s voice, is imaginative, and does not contain extraneous side stories. This essay must contain a definite beginning, middle and end.

- ❖ Keep the story you are telling. Don’t go on a tangent.
- ❖ Make sure events happen in order.
- ❖ Use great vocabulary.
- ❖ Use dialogue somewhere in your story.
- ❖ Use similes and strong verbs to enhance descriptions.
- ❖ Make sure you use details to make the story interesting.
- ❖ Pick either *I* or *he/she*. Don’t use both.

The Beginning, Middle and End of a Narrative

Beginning

- ❖ Begin with something interesting to hook you reader.
- ❖ Introduce the characters.
- ❖ Describe the scene
- ❖ Tell when the story happens

Middle

- ❖ Develop your story with at least one specific incident.
- ❖ Keep your events in chronological order.
- ❖ Include descriptions.
- ❖ The action takes place in the middle.
- ❖ Include dialogue.
- ❖ Include similes.

End

- ❖ Bring your story to a close, referring to events in the story.