



## Pre-Lesson Interview

Hi, my name is Anita Archer and I'm an educational consultant who works across the country with different school districts, implementing reading programs.

And today I have an opportunity to work in a school where I am supporting and teaching some of their children.

I'm going to be teaching an intermediate group of students who are 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>- graders. Because this school does "Walk to Reading" – meaning that they move to different classes so they can be at an appropriate level – this includes kids from a number of different grades. And they are making very good progress, but they have had some struggles in the acquisition of reading. So it's a small group with *very systematic instruction* provided to them.

When you think of intermediate students, there's one word that comes to mind in terms of reading instruction and that word is "strategy". Strategy, strategy, strategy. And in this class, because many of them have had more difficulty attaining reading, it's even more important that they receive very explicit strategies.

So we're going to focus on strategies for reading long words, because we have lots of evidence that for students that are in upper grades, when we look at those that are – at this moment – lower-performing students versus their higher-performing peers, that one thing that really separates the group is their ability to read longer words.

In terms of vocabulary, we're going to focus on a strategy – *context clues* – for figuring out the meaning of a word. And then, as we read the passage, because it's factual – expository – we're going to look for the *main idea* of paragraphs and the *supportive details*. And I think it is very critical, not only for struggling readers (intermediate students), but **all** students, that their instruction basically is defined by strategies that they could use in the future and that they use again and again and again.

Because this intermediate group is a group that has had a history of failure – we know a lot about teaching those students – that they need to be set up for as much success as possible. And so the instruction has to be very *explicit*. It's obvious that they didn't discover these strategies, so it has to be very explicit, with good modeling and lots of guided practice. And again, just like with the primary students, we need as much active participation as possible: *saying things together, sharing answers with partners, reading orally together, reading with partners*: everything that we can do that will include **everyone**, would be the most important strategies that I'm going to use as a teacher.

Of course, as we teach, we need to be doing ongoing assessment, and so, I will be assessing them through the questions I ask. I'll have them say it together – I'll listen to all

the responses. When they share answers to partners, one of the things I will be doing is honing in on individual children so I get immediate feedback on their acquisition. And, as they are reading with their partner, I will monitor and also get feedback. So, you know, we often look at assessment as some kind of terminal act, but it's much more formative. As you're teaching, you're listening to **all** the responses of the students, so you can change your instruction as you're doing it.

I'll have to be particularly astute, because of the range of students and the fact that they have more difficulty in acquiring information. So, again, listening to the responses when they say things together, particularly, listening when they share answers with their peers.

And one other thing you might notice is that I will have the students read things silently before we read it chorally or to a partner and as they're reading silently, I will go to each of the students and have them whisper-read to me, so I can get an idea of their accuracy as well as their fluency.

And I really want you to notice this, because it's one of the things I **strongly** recommend to all teachers, but particularly intermediate teachers. Because if you teach a large group, and you call on one child, then the other students, again, are off-task. So *you need to use reading practices that involve everyone*, including *silent reading*, but you have to use it as an opportunity to monitor their progress.

We have *curriculum*, we have the *delivery* of that curriculum and simultaneously, we have the *management*. And a good teacher never ever can concern him or herself with just the curriculum – just the delivery – without thinking about management.

This intermediate group of children comes to this class with a history of failure. And thus, they are even more likely to have potential management problems, just to cover up the fact that they may not know a word – they may not know an answer – they may not feel successful. And so, particularly with that group, you still have *clear expectations*; you still *model* things; you still *monitor*; you still have a *perky pace*; you still avoid voids. But, more importantly, you *set them up for success* so they can say, "I can do this! I know how to do this!" And as soon as you're comfortable knowing what you're going to do, all the other challenges just dissipate. So my goal there will be particularly to make it so they're very successful and to honor them.

One of the things I do when I work with intermediate children is when we're brainstorming, I'll write their idea and their name on the overhead. As a result, they see that they have been personally honored for their ideas, and then they're much more willing to give you the gift of attention and participation.

You know, with the intermediate group, I'm using a strategy that I modified from the work of Ed Ellis: a strategy that teaches kids the behaviors we want. "SLANTS" is a mnemonic device for: *Sit up, Listen, Ask, Answer, Nod and Track*. And you know, if our kids did that (sit up, looking at you, they're participating – they're nodding to show they understand, they're keeping their eyes on you), they're really giving you the behaviors that allow them access to the content.