Using Readers Strategy Lists (RSL)

One easy way to get the conversation going in your classroom is to ask readers how they read. Given an opportunity to reflect and think about how they approach a text is enlightening, and students will reveal some of their approaches to reading. This opportunity to share in discussing reading processes helps others think about their own approaches to reading.

Reading Apprenticeship® methods suggest that students first individually jot down their own methods or strategies for reading a specific text. Next, the students should pair up and share what they have written. Once that conversation has taken place, the class should report out their findings. In this way, readers have an opportunity to report on their own habits, listen to the reading habits of others, and then create a shared document, which is hung in prominence in the classroom.

The Readers Strategy List is generated by students for the students. It is an ongoing dynamic classroom artifact that serves as a reminder to the students that there are different ways of reading, that different texts require different methods, and that the process of reading discipline-specific texts is essential to understand if one hopes to improve his effectiveness and mastery of complex academic texts.

Various applications for using Readers Strategy List

1. Articulate and focus the classroom on reading processes and community building around reading
2. Compare two texts which require different reading skills, levels of language or technical jargon
3. Help provide readers with language about reading and their reading processes
4. Provide a venue for making the “invisible skills and approaches” more visible
5. Develop readers’ identity and skills for reading a wide variety of discipline-specific text.
In order to achieve a high quality document that will help readers grow in their reading skills, an instructor may need to ask the students to provide an example of the strategy they want to add to the list.

For example, a student may say, “Bold font.” Instructors can help the student articulate what s/he means by asking: “Can you point the text where bold font is used and explain how this text uses bold font to organize, present, or shape content?”

This kind of inquiry helps students think more deeply about their reading processes and their texts. The instructor serves as a scribe writing down whatever the students contribute as ways of thinking and approaching texts.

Often, the class as a whole sees the use of the RSL as a cheat sheet during reading tasks. Instructors can elicit responses with: “What are some different approaches to making sense of this text?” “What do effective readers rely on to make sense of this text?” “How do we make meaning from this text?”

Thus, a Readers Strategy List is a listing of the strategies used to decode, decipher, and comprehend a passage. It is useful because it provides a common language for talking about reading (combining previous knowledge with new). Most importantly, it points out that different strategies are used with different types of reading. Readers will seek these tools to assist them in taking on more difficult reading tasks. The students can capture their reading processes by creating a RSL together. These lists are posted in the classroom as tools to aid comprehension and the production of the list builds the four dimensions of the Reading Apprenticeship framework: personal, social, cognitive, and knowledge-building.

**Why Do Readers Strategy Lists Work?**

RSL promote metacognitive conversation by guiding students in noticing their thinking, focusing on reading, taking charge of their reading, and becoming aware of subject area discourse.

For more information and supporting materials about creating Readers Strategy Lists, visit the RTC Library’s LibGuide about Reading Apprenticeship® and RATs (Reading Apprenticeship Teachers and supporters) at [http://libguides.rtc.edu/rats](http://libguides.rtc.edu/rats). At the LibGuide, click on the Reading Apprenticeship Routines drop down menu, and then on the Readers Strategy Lists option. There you will find:

- A video of Michele Lesmeister’s class creating a Readers Strategy List
- Ready-to-use templates for creating Readers Strategy Lists developed by Michele
- A sampling of RTC Library materials with info on how to read different types of texts.

*RAT Tracks* is published monthly at Renton Technical College (RTC) to provide ideas for using Reading Apprenticeship® routines in the classrooms. Content is provided by RTC Faculty member Michele Lesmeister with editing and formatting by RTC Faculty Librarian Debbie Crumb. Issues are available for viewing online at the [RATs website at http://rtc-rats.org](http://rtc-rats.org)

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