Unit 3:
Comprehension Instructional Routines

TEXAS
TALA
ADOLESCENT
LITERACY
ACADEMIES

Module 2:
Identifying Main Ideas in Text

Participant Notes

The Meadows Center
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK

VAUGHN GROSS CENTER
· FOR READING & LANGUAGE ARTS ·
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

Unit 3:
Comprehension Instructional Routines

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Module 2:
Identifying Main Ideas in Text

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Comprehension Strategies
Across Content Areas

Unit 3: Comprehension Instructional Routines	
Module	**Title**
1	Building Background Knowledge With Anticipation-Reaction Guides
2	Identifying Main Ideas in Text
3	Writing Summaries

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Objectives

- Understand how providing support in identifying main ideas during reading improves students' comprehension of text.

- Construct a Notes Log to teach students how to identify critical information in paragraphs and determine the main idea.

- Apply the three-step process for explicit instruction to the implementation of the Notes Log for identifying main ideas and details.

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Supporting Comprehension by Identifying Main Ideas During Reading

- Actively taking notes helps students be more attentive, think about the information they are learning, and commit ideas to memory.

(Anderson & Armbruster, 1986; Kiewra, 1985)

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Supporting Comprehension by Identifying Main Ideas During Reading (cont.)

- Even expert readers must rely on strategies to construct main ideas when text information is difficult or unfamiliar.
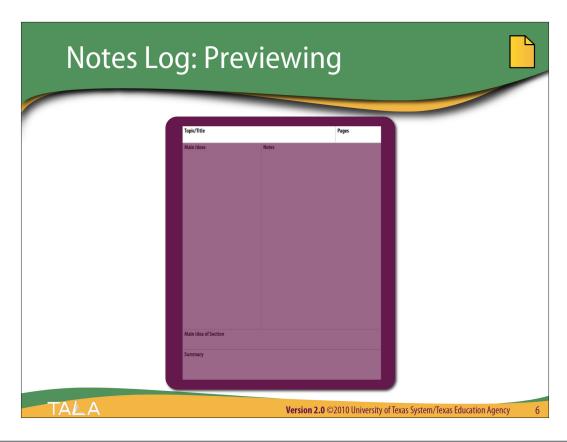
(Afflerbach, 1990)

- Adolescent students who are directly and explicitly taught strategies for identifying the main idea of a passage have increased reading comprehension.

(Jitendra, Hoppes, & Xin, 2000; Sjostrom & Hare, 1984)

Notes Log: Previewing

Topic/Title		Pages
Main Ideas	Notes	
Main Idea of Section		
Summary		

Previewing:
Modeling Phase: *I Do*

1. Use the vocabulary instructional routine to introduce important vocabulary words:

   – Select academic and content-specific words.

   – Pronounce the words.

   – Provide student-friendly definitions.

2. Record the title/topic and the page numbers for the chapter or section.

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Previewing:
Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

3. State the primary focus of the chapter or section and explain how it connects to students' prior learning.

4. "Think aloud" as you look at the title, page numbers, and headings/terms/graphs/tables/pictures.
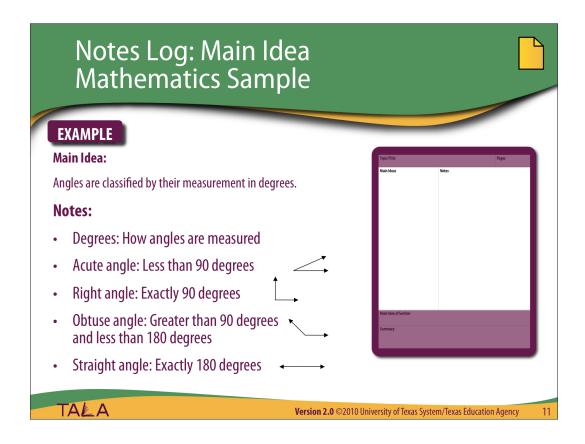
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Main Idea Instructional Routine

1. Complete the previewing routine.

2. Identify the main ideas of each paragraph.

3. Record important details related to the main ideas.

4. Compose a Main Idea of the Section statement.

Notes Log: Main Idea

Main ideas

Details

Notes Log: Main Idea
Mathematics Sample

EXAMPLE

Main Idea:

Angles are classified by their measurement in degrees.

Notes:

- Degrees: How angles are measured
- Acute angle: Less than 90 degrees
- Right angle: Exactly 90 degrees
- Obtuse angle: Greater than 90 degrees and less than 180 degrees
- Straight angle: Exactly 180 degrees

Topic/Title		Pages
Main Ideas	Notes	
Main Idea of Section		
Summary		

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Main Idea:
Modeling Phase: *I Do*

- Explain the purpose for identifying the main idea.
  - Make sure you understand what you are reading.
  - Think about the information.
  - Help yourself remember important information later.
- Remind students of the primary focus for the chapter/section and how it connects to their prior learning.
- Read a paragraph of the text.
  - When first introducing the routine for identifying the main idea, it is important to work with only one paragraph at a time.

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Main Idea:
Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

Explain that you will identify the main idea of the paragraph using the Get the Gist routine.

1. Name the "who" or "what": the person, place, or thing that is the topic.

2. Tell the most important information about the "who" or "what."

   • Has what?

   • Is what?

   • Does what?

3. Say it in 10 words or less. Must be a complete sentence.*

   Keep in mind that answer choices on assessments are sometimes stated in incomplete sentences and that these answer choices may not be limited to 10 words.
   (Klingner, Vaughn, Dimino, Schumm, & Bryant, 2001)

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Main Idea:
Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

Step 1: Name the "who" or "what" of the paragraph in as few words as possible.

Correct Example	Incorrect Example
North America	What caused North America to be difficult for people to reach

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Main Idea:
Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

Step 2: Tell the most important information about the "who" or "what" in the paragraph.

Correct Example	Incorrect Example
(what: North America)	(what: North America)
It is isolated by ocean waters.	It is bordered by the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Gulf of Mexico to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

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Main Idea:
Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

Step 3: Say it in 10 words or less.

Correct Example	Incorrect Example
The waters surrounding North America isolated it for many years.	Because North America is surrounded by ocean waters, it has developed unique plants and animals and was difficult for people to reach for many years.

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Main Idea:
Modeling Phase: *I Do* (cont.)

Record other important information in the Notes section of the log:

– Details, facts, examples

– Words in bold or italics

– Enumerated/bulleted lists

Main Idea:
Teacher-assisted Phase: *WE Do*

• Before continuing, review the Get the Gist routine by asking students:

– Why is it important to find the main ideas as we read?

– What are the steps in our main idea Get the Gist routine?

– What do we do with the important details?*

Remember that a significant detail may be included in the gist.

Main Idea:
Teacher-assisted Phase: *WE Do* (cont.)

- Continue writing the main idea for one paragraph at a time.
  - Guide students as they use the Get the Gist routine.
  - If necessary, model the routine again with a "think aloud."
- Ask students to tell you what to record in the Notes section. Consider the following:
  - Important details, facts, examples
  - Words in bold or italics
  - Enumerated/bulleted lists

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Notes Log: Main Idea:
Social Studies Sample

EXAMPLE

Main Idea:
The waters surrounding North America isolated it for many years.

Notes:

- Artic Ocean (north) to the Gulf of Mexico (south)
- Pacific Ocean (west) to the Atlantic Ocean (east)
- Unique plants (sequoia tree and saguaro cactus)
- Unique animals (bald eagle and alligator)
- Difficult for people to reach (early settlers and attackers during WWI and WWII)

Topic/Title		Pages
Main Ideas	Notes	
Main Idea of Section		
Summary		

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Main Idea:
Independent Practice: *YOU Do*

1. Complete the previewing routine.
    a. Introduce the important academic and content-specific vocabulary words.
    b. Have students record the title/topic and the page numbers for the chapter or section.
    c. State the primary focus of the chapter or section.
    d. Have students look at the title, page numbers, headings, terms, graphs, tables, and pictures.

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Main Idea:
Independent Practice: *YOU Do* (cont.)

2. Ask students to write the main ideas with the Get the Gist routine.
    a. Name the "who" or "what."
    b. Tell the most important information.
    c. Say it in 10 words or less.
3. Periodically critique students' main idea statements.
4. Ask students to record the following in the Notes section:
    a. Details, facts, examples
    b. Words in bold or italics
    c. Enumerated/bulleted lists

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Practice Identifying Main Ideas and Details in Text

Using the sample passage *Physical and Chemical Properties,* practice using Get the Gist to identify the main idea. Record your statement and the important details on the Notes Log.

Topic/Title		Pages
Main Ideas	Notes	

Main Idea of Section

Summary

Main Idea of the Section

It is possible to identify main ideas of individual paragraphs, a series of paragraphs, or an entire passage.

- Use the Get the Gist routine to identify the main idea of a longer section of text.

    a. Name the "who" or "what."

    b. Tell the most important information.

    c. Say it in 10 words or less.

Notes Log: English Language Arts Sample

SAMPLE 1
Main Idea of Section:
Memories help ease the pain of losing a loved one.

SAMPLE 2
Main Idea of Section:
Kenny's first morning in Alabama is spent listening to Mr. Robert and then to Grandma Sands.

Topic/Title		Pages
Main Ideas	Notes	
Main Idea of Section		
Summary		

Notes Log: Science Sample

SAMPLE 1
Main Idea of Section:
Energy from the sun is transferred from producers to consumers and decomposers.

SAMPLE 2
Main Idea of Section:
It is essential that we protect our tropical rainforests.

Topic/Title		Pages
Main Ideas	Notes	
Main Idea of Section		
Summary		

Scaffolding

- Provide the number of details to locate for each paragraph.

- Encourage the use of pictures, symbols, and diagrams.

- Provide templates with completed portions of the Main Idea and Notes sections and portions containing blanks to be filled in by the student.

- When necessary, return to modeling how to write main ideas and select important details.

- Gradually increase students' responsibility for grasping the main idea of text.

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Summary

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Reflection Log

Identifying the Main Ideas

Think about how you might use the information presented in this module to plan instruction and support students' academic literacy needs.

- What seemed particularly useful to you?

- What ideas were new and interesting?

- What confirmed or challenged your previous beliefs?

- What questions do you still have?

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