

Mini-Lessons: Main Idea and Supporting Details

Distinguishing between a topic and a main idea: A topic is the general subject dealt with in a text or discussion. A main idea is the important thought (implied or expressed) that the author is conveying about the topic.

- Model in short reading selection how you distinguish (think out) the difference between an author's topic (eg. bullying, tectonic plates) and the main idea the author is making about that topic.

Adapted by J. Spielman, Center for Educational Options from Zweirs, J. FOUR POWERFUL STRATEGIES FOR STRUGGLING READERS, GRADES 3–8.

Modeling Note-taking of Main Idea and Supporting (relevant) Details

- Model note-taking using two-column chart. Once again the versatile two column notes outline also comes in handy as an aid to guide students towards understanding the strategy of *Determining Importance- Main Idea and Supporting Details*. When using two columns, the left column would state the main idea and the right column would list the important, *relevant* details that support the main idea.

- Modeling should occur frequently using short reading and listening selections. Teachers should focus not only on conclusions about main ideas and details, but on modeling how and why they arrived at those conclusions.

- It is important to think aloud about how the focus on what you as the teacher believe to be important (i.e. main idea and supporting details) enhances comprehension. It would also be a good idea to include some of your own knowledge.

- Be sure students provide some evidence or reasoning to support their judgments. Model how you do this.

- ***Make the transfer to writing explicit and vice versa. Do not assume that just because you taught and they learned main idea and supporting details as readers that they will automatically grasp these deep concepts as writers.***

- A student shared with his teacher that, "*Determining importance (main idea and supporting details) is like a strainer, and the words are like noodles in a pot. It sifts out the water and leaves the noodles.*"

Adapted from breed2.lynnsschools.org/DeterminingImportance.ppt by J. Spielman, Center for Educational Options

Mini-Lessons for Teaching Transition Words For Higher Order Reading and Writing

- Explicitly point out the use of transition words in short reading selections as well as in NCSS exemplars.

- Work together as a class and then in small groups or pairs to find transition words in reading and use them to deepen understanding of author's purpose or main idea and supporting details.

- Write shared sentences as a class that use transition words.

- Assign students to include transition words in specific writing assignments.

Note Taking: Main Idea and Supporting (relevant) Details

Main Idea	Supporting (Relevant) Details