Annotation as an Interactive Reading Strategy
Coaching Guide

Module Summary

In this module, teachers will:
- Define what annotation is and how to use it.
- Identify benefits of annotation.
- Examine the process for teaching annotation.

Module activities:
Teachers will explore the steps of teaching annotation and explore examples of what these steps look like in practice.

Key Takeaways

Essential knowledge:
Annotation is a comprehension strategy in which one uses symbols, comments, and questions to record thinking while reading. Annotation offers several benefits. It helps students pause with a purpose, engage with the text (Brown, 2007), and use divergent thinking (Porter-O’Donnell, 2004). It also helps the teacher differentiate for students (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Essential skill:
Using the resource, teachers will learn steps for implementing annotation. These steps are:
1. Prepare to annotate by selecting a text and explaining why students are annotating.
2. Model how to annotate with examples
3. Monitor student practice
4. Extend meaning

Essential mindset:
It’s important for teachers to think about why they want their students to annotate a text. Here are some possible reasons:
- They anticipate a text will pose challenges for their students.
- They want students to practice a recently taught skill.
- They want students to practice the skill of annotation so they can apply it to texts they’ll read later.

Strategies like annotation can help students reach deeper levels of comprehension.
The Skill in Action

Prior to annotating:
The teacher should select a text to annotate. Then the teacher should explain to students why they're using annotation (McLaughlin, 2013).

During annotating:
The teacher should conduct a “think aloud” to demonstrate how to annotate. Using 1-2 examples, the teacher should explain when and why to pause (e.g. pause when a question about the text enters your mind). Then, the teacher should model how to write down one’s thinking in response to the text (e.g. highlight the lines of text that led to a connection and write your thoughts in the margin). As students are practicing, the teacher should monitor their work and consider this question: “What do these annotations tell me about what the student’s mind is doing as he or she reads?”

After annotating:
Students should do something meaningful with their annotations when they finish. The purpose for extending meaning is to help the students connect their individual experience with the text to another person’s, and to synthesize their understanding.

Questions for Discussion
The following is a list of suggested questions for engaging in a reflective dialogue with the teacher either before or after he or she attempts to implement the skill.

- How do you believe the knowledge and skills highlighted in this module will benefit your growth as a teacher?
- What were your key takeaways from this module?
- What struggles or challenges do you think you may encounter when teaching your students how to annotate?
- How will you give students feedback on their annotations?
- How can I help you in your process of mastering this skill (e.g. observation, feedback on a lesson plan, follow up conversation, etc.)?

Coaching Moves

Situation: Students’ annotations are superficial and/or they don’t seem to be using the strategy purposefully.

Ask:
- How did you model annotation for your students?
- What different methods have you shown students for annotating text (e.g. highlighting/underlining, marking the text with symbols, writing comments or questions in the margins, etc.)?
- How have you explained the purpose of annotation to students?

Suggest:
- Use the “think-aloud” strategy to model the process of using annotations to make sense of text.
- Model and discuss the difference between useful/purposeful annotations, and superficial or unhelpful ones.
- Don’t demand that students make a minimum number of annotations. Frame the strategy as one of the tools they can use to comprehend text.

Standards

InTASC: 5h - The teacher develops and implements supports for learner literacy development across content areas.