

“What did you do this summer?” “Tell me about your favorite book?” “How do you get your dahlias to bloom that way?” Am I asking for every little detail, a minute-by-minute, blow-by-blow account? No! What I really want is a **summary**, the main points presented with enough detail to make them clear. Summarizing is a “real life” skill that some people do well and others, well, they go on and on and on Anyhow, besides being a critical skill in day-to-day conversations, summarizing is an important skill for lifelong learning and communicating.

We don’t have a huge amount on summarizing in our CRISS text, so I was glad when I recently ran across a summarizing strategy, GRASP, that seemed to be easy to apply.

GUIDED READING AND SUMMARY PROCEDURE (GRASP)

In her Article, “Collaborative Research” (Rekrut, 1997), Martha D. Rekrut presents some innovative student research projects and emphasizes how important summarizing is for students as they read and record information from various sources. One of the summarizing strategies she writes about is GRASP (Hayes, 1989). I liked this procedure so well, that I went back to the original source, David A. Hayes’ article, in order to give you the best possible “summary” of the strategy.

As with CRISS strategy instruction, GRASP begins with lots of teacher modeling and progresses to student ownership and independent application. The initial GRASP lesson, with the teacher in control, consists of four steps.

- The teacher prepares the students for the lesson.
- The students read the selection to remember details.
- The teacher helps them group the remembered details categorically.
- The students work with the teacher to change the organized details into sentences and a written summary.

1) Preparing to read. Teacher modeling should be done on a selection of approximately 500 words for middle school students to 1500 words for high school students. After eliciting student background knowledge and setting content purposes for the reading, teachers need to let the students know that they are learning a process *in class* that will be useful to them personally when they are doing outside reading independently.

2) Reading to remember. The teacher directs the students to read the selection and remember as much information as possible. When all students have completed the reading, the teacher asks them to brainstorm all the facts they remember and/or think they remember. The teacher records this information on a board or paper. If students correct each other during this time, write both sets of information on the board. After all information is recorded, have the students quickly refer to the *text* for corrections and additions to the information. Do not cross out or erase the original information, instead circle and rewrite new information in a new color or indicate changes with an arrow. Leaving the old and new information together allows the students to see the whole procedure.

3) Grouping remembered information. Similar to the second step in the **Know - Want to know - Learned** strategy (Ogle, 1986) where brainstormed background knowledge is organized into categories, GRASP has the students organize their information into topical areas prior to writing. To establish these areas, the teacher and students together try to figure out the major topics in the selection. Using these topics, the teacher models how the first few pieces of information can be

categorized and writes them under the appropriate headings. Then, the teacher prompts and guides the students to organize the remaining information. They are encouraged to identify subcategories of information (Powers 3 & 4) under each topic.

4) Writing the summary. Before writing the summary, the teacher needs to post three rules:

- Include *important* information, leave out details that are not necessary to summarize the main topics.
- Compress information by combining similar details.
- Add words and/or phrases to make the summary cohesive and coherent.

The teacher then models how to write a sentence summarizing the information under the first major topic. While composing, the teacher demonstrates how less important information can be left out, how similar types of information can be combined, and the positive effect of adding words and phrases. After modeling with the first topic, the teacher asks the students to write a sentence combining the information from the second topic. As the students write, the teacher also writes a sentence on the board. When all students are done, the teacher has several share their sentences. Information from the student sentences is used to modify the teacher's sentence. The teacher adds the student ideas without erasing, so the students can easily see the revision process. On occasion, a topic might require two sentences, but students are encouraged to create only one if possible. The teacher and students continue to collaborate on the remaining topics and information until a summary paragraph has been created.

Initially these paragraphs may be a bit rough, but they are much better than the traditional series of plagiarized sentences which often serves as a student summary. In addition, the process of creating the paragraph involves reading, organizing, metacognition, note taking, discussion, and writing (WOW!), so you know this has to be a powerful comprehension strategy and one that can be easily owned and independently used by students.

References

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About the author: Dr. Carol Santa is the founder of Project CRISS and former Curriculum Director for the Kalispell schools in Montana.

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