The Promise of Process: Using Verbal Protocol to Explore Fourth Graders Construction of Meaning from Social Studies Texts

In this study, we used verbal protocol methodology to examine how fourth-grade students construct meaning as they read and respond to informational social studies texts. Results indicate that most students were active readers, often engaging in higher-level comprehension strategies. However, these understandings were not often visible in their responses to end-of-reading questions (ERQ). In contrast, as they respond to the ERQ, students generally shifted their strategy use toward lower-level strategies such as rereading, flipping through the pages, and relying on memory of text passages. Results also indicate that when students changed their patterns of strategy use for reading and responding to text in response to a change in text, they are more successful on the ERQ than when their strategy use remains stagnant. In addition to discussing the study, we will also share implications for teaching and assessment, particularly as they relate to data-driven instruction.

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