**CENTER FOR URBAN SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS @ TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY**



**Teacher Tip VOLUME 2**

 **01/2025**

**"What’s the Main Idea?": Using Text Structure to Build Comprehension**

 *Alida K. Hudson, Julie Owens, Karol A. Moore, Kacee Lambright, Kausalai (Kay) Wijekumar*

The article emphasizes the importance of using text structure as a framework to improve students' reading comprehension. The Framework for Accelerating the Strategic Comprehension of Text (FASCT) involves teaching students to identify the top-level structure of a text, derive the main idea using structured sentence stems, and extend the main idea to a summary by adding supporting details. Recognizing text structures such as comparison, cause-effect, and problem-solution fosters deeper comprehension and critical thinking. FASCT is presented as an evidence-based, efficient, daily instructional strategy that can be integrated across various genres and grade levels to enhance students' ability to connect and synthesize ideas within a text.

**Using text structure to support reading comprehension:**

* Students proficient at generating main ideas and summaries after reading connect ideas from the text together in a logical manner, thus having deeper comprehension of the text.
* Most texts are organized by one or a combination of two or more specific text structures (e.g., comparison, cause-effect), which can be leveraged to help students understand the main idea of a text.

**Steps in Text Structure Instruction:**

* Before reading, introduce the text and pre-teach relevant vocabulary.
* After reading:
	1. identify the overall text structure focusing on the higher-order structures of cause-effect, problem-solution, and comparison
	2. develop the main idea statement using text structure-specific main idea stems (e.g., The problem is \_\_\_, and the solution is \_\_\_.)
	3. extend the main idea statement into a summary by adding key details to each part of the main idea

**Recommendations for teachers:**

* Provide daily explicit and systematic instruction on identifying and using higher-order text structures to derive main ideas and summaries. This approach can scaffold comprehension and critical thinking.
* While text structure strategies are often associated with expository texts, teachers can apply these strategies to various genres, including narratives, poems, and picture books, to deepen understanding and engagement.
* Model the thinking that is involved in every stage of the FASCT process.

**Recommendations for principals:**

* Professional support and continued professional development for teachers focused on explicitly and systematically using text structures, main ideas, and summaries when teaching reading comprehension.
* Access to technology aligned with the text structure strategy such as the Intelligent Tutoring System for the Text Structure Strategy to support integration of structured comprehension strategies.
* Monitor and support implementation of FASCT through coaching and feedback