

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

FOCUS on

RECOGNIZING
CAUSE AND EFFECT





A Research-based Reading Series

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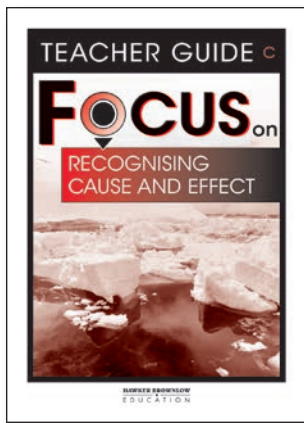
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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

FOCUS is a series designed for on-level readers who need repeated practice, for struggling readers, and for English-language learners (ELL). This reading-strategy series provides practice for students who are reading at 1.0–8.9 reading levels. **FOCUS** centers on brief instruction and concentrated practice with targeted reading strategies. The series focuses on the higher-order reading strategies with which struggling readers need extensive practice. The selections in the series span curriculum content areas. Each student book has twenty reading selections with which students can practice a specific reading strategy. Each selection is followed by comprehension questions that require students to apply the focused reading strategy. In addition, students can further their comprehension experience by responding to a constructed-response question that also follows the selection.

The design of the reading selections and the comprehension questions is based on research from several areas. **FOCUS** is supported by current research regarding reading instruction of English-language readers and struggling readers.

HOW IS FOCUS SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH ON STRUGGLING READERS, INCLUDING ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

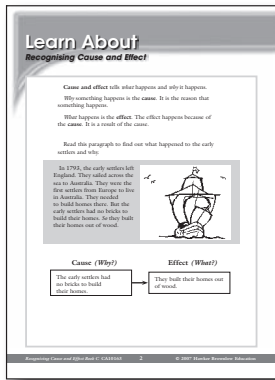
Much of the research on effective instruction for struggling readers parallels the National Reading Panel instructional recommendations. Practice in activating prior knowledge, self-monitoring, and the use of graphic elements (Siegel, 2001) are also supported by research-based recommendations for struggling readers. **FOCUS** also includes additional research-based instructional strategies for struggling readers. Researchers have shown that struggling readers have need a for extensive practice with reading strategies. “Almost 40 percent of fourth graders read below the basic level” (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 2005).

Why are English-language learners considered struggling readers? National test results explain why: “Students as English-proficient children in the second generation and beyond, score significantly lower in reading than other students.

SKILL RANGES OF STRUGGLING AND EFFECTIVE READERS

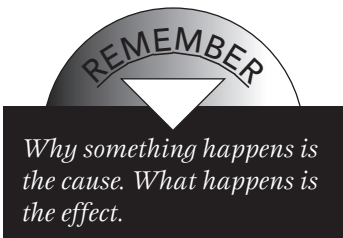
▼	▼	▼		
<i>Comprehension</i>	▶	<i>Narrow</i>	▶	<i>Expansive</i>
<i>Vocabulary</i>	▶	<i>Undeveloped</i>	▶	<i>Proficient</i>
<i>Fluency</i>	▶	<i>Disjointed</i>	▶	<i>Effortless</i>
<i>Word Identification</i>	▶	<i>Limited</i>	▶	<i>Automatic</i>

(Dickson, 2005)



↑

Researchers have proven that struggling students succeed with tightly written, well-organized instructional text.



↑

The Remember box is a point of reference for students as they attend to each lesson.

While ELL students face obvious challenges to improve their reading scores, research-based teaching instructions are available. “[W]ith allowances for the language issues themselves, effective reading instruction for English language learners may be similar to effective instruction for English-proficient children, whether the ELLs are first taught in their native language or in English” (Slavin & Cheung, 2003, p. 30).

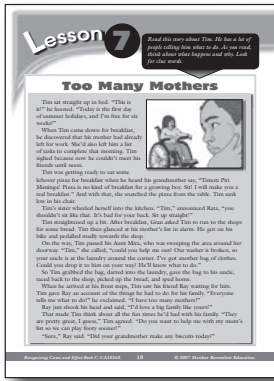
FOCUS is a program that is comprehensive in its use of effective learning and teaching strategies for on-level and struggling readers.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Explicit Instruction | Extensive Reading and Genre Exposure |
| Scaffolded Instruction | Cooperative Learning |
| Previewing | Clue Word Instruction |
| Graphic Organisers | |

Explicit Instruction

FOCUS uses explicit instruction in the teaching of the reading strategies. The explicit instruction occurs in the Learn About section and the Lesson Preview section of each book. Researchers Manset-Williamson and Nelson (2005) explain, “. . . explicit instruction involves the overt, teacher-directed instruction of strategies, including direct explanation, modeling, and guided practice in the application of strategies” (p. 62). “The explicitness with which teachers teach comprehension strategies makes a difference in learner outcomes, especially for low-achieving students (modeling and careful scaffolding is key)” (Abadiano & Turner, 2003, p. 76). Through the Lesson Preview section, students receive explicit instruction consisting of a definition, a short example passage, clue words if appropriate, and a usage rule for the reading strategy.

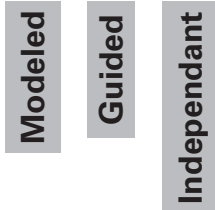
Additionally, **FOCUS** is a perfect vehicle for struggling readers because it does not overwhelm students with the presentation of information. “[B]rief, well-organized, tightly written texts are used to introduce the strategy, because readers are more capable of using the strategy initially with ‘small segments of well-organized text that contain explicit ideas and relations’ ” (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1996, p. 615). In the Learn About section, students initially experience the reading strategy in a short paragraph, usually three to seven sentences long. The Remember box is a text feature that provides



Students have the opportunity to read 960 passages throughout the FOCUS series.

FOCUS

Scaffolded Instruction



a point of reference for students to use while attending to lessons. The Remember box is consistently placed in each book of the series. Struggling or novice readers usually skip or gloss over text features, which are valuable comprehension tools. With repeated exposure and external prompting by the teacher, students learn to pay attention to text features.

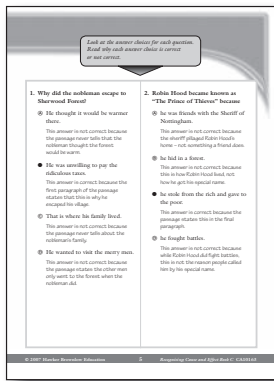
Extensive Reading and Genre Exposure

Throughout the **FOCUS** series, students have the opportunity to read 960 reading selections, which include both nonfiction and fiction genres. In **FOCUS**, students, especially in the early grades, are exposed to genres that they typically don't encounter. "When students reach the fourth grade, they are generally expected to begin to read, comprehend, and write informational text, often with no regard for the fact that their primary grade experiences likely included little or no exposure to such texts (Duke, 2000; Christie, 1987)" (Tower, 2003, p. 15). The practice of reading fiction and nonfiction genres and their related text structure benefits students' comprehension. "Introducing young readers to a variety of texts prepares them to deal with more complex texts (and complex issues) in the future (Fisher, Flood, & Lapp, 1999; Snow et al., 1998)" (Barton & Sawyer, 2003, p. 2). "Looking for and using text structure helps students to study and think more deeply about ideas encountered during reading" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 391). Repeated practice with each genre and its text structure ensures that students will internalize the genre's characteristics. As students become more proficient in comprehending a genre and text structure, they also become more fluent readers. "Schools also need to be aware that text availability, in a variety of genres and on a variety of reading levels, is essential to meeting students' varied needs" (Ash, 2002).

Scaffolded Instruction

Scaffolded instruction benefits all students, including ELL students. The instructional goal in any curriculum classroom is to develop independent learners. "Yet, many students in today's diverse classrooms have trouble handling the conceptual demands inherent in text material when left to their own devices to learn . . . In a nutshell, instructional scaffolding allows teachers to support students' efforts to make sense of texts while showing them how to use strategies that will, over time, lead to independent learning" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 25). Scaffolded instruction is the basic organizational framework of the **FOCUS** series.

Modeled Instruction and Guided Practice



Modeled and guided practice are hallmarks of effective teaching strategies for struggling students.



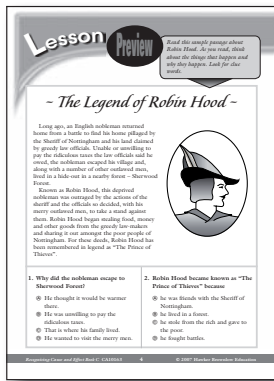
ELL students gain motivation, confidence, and experience in hearing and speaking English among peers.

According to Ash (2002) and Flood & Lapp (1990), modeled instruction and guided reading are effective teaching strategies for struggling students. Students who need extensive teacher support benefit from the teacher-directed Learn About section and the Lesson Preview section. In the Lesson Preview section, students learn how to progress through the lesson by one of a variety of methods: teacher-directed, small group, or one-on-one discourse with a teacher or student. Teachers may employ a think-aloud strategy as a means of aiding struggling readers. "In think-alouds, teachers make their thinking explicit by verbalizing their thoughts while reading orally" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 83). Students then experience text-guided instruction as they respond to the reading-strategy questions that follow the reading selection. This guided practice provides experience with the strategy and gives students a feeling of control over the strategy before they work with a group or independently. As an offshoot of the think-aloud reading strategy, guided practice also makes explicit the reasoning of each answer choice.

Another form of guided practice is the use of cooperative learning, including paired and group work. "English language learners have been found to benefit from instruction in comprehensive reform programs using systematic phonics, one-to-one or small group tutoring programs, cooperative learning programs, and programs emphasizing extensive reading" (Slavin & Cheung, 2003, p. 2). "Because of the potential value of collaborative student interactions, we underscore the invaluable contribution of cooperative learning in diverse classrooms" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 150). In **FOCUS**, students are encouraged to work independently at first as they read and answer the questions. Students then meet with partners, or in a small group or a large group of students to discuss their responses. This engagement with peers stimulates learning through multiple senses (speaking, listening, reading, writing), which is a necessity when accommodating the multiple learning styles that exist in a classroom.

Independent Practice

With twenty selections through which to practice a reading strategy, students become independent learners during the course of completing a book. With the help of self-regulation, students will recognize when they have mastered a strategy and then move to a higher reading level of the same strategy or to a different strategy. "Practice gives children opportunities to evaluate their own performances, make corrections, and increase skills" (Morrow, 2003, p. 861). Scaffolded instruction of each reading strategy in the **FOCUS** series provides one of the most effective ways for students to learn and practice the reading strategies.



Previewing

Each **FOCUS** book previews its targeted reading strategy before students begin to work independently. “Students who listen to the previews before reading the text often significantly outperform students who do not have previews on several measures of comprehension (Cheney, 1990; Mastropieri, Leinart, & Scruggs, 1999). Previewing is also an effective reading and comprehension strategy for use with English language learners (Chen & Graves, 1998)” (Flood, Lapp, & Fisher, 2003, p. 963).

Each **FOCUS** student book begins with a preview of the targeted reading strategy. Here, teachers model expected responses. This Lesson Preview section also provides guided practice, which demonstrates the thinking process for answering the two selected-response questions. Additionally, teachers may model the previews of each lesson’s content by reading aloud from the direction box. This direction box in each student book lesson gives students a reading-strategy reminder.

Clue words can signal cause and effect. Here are some cause-effect clue words: *so, so that, since, because, if, reason, and as a result.*

Clue words help students process the organisation of text.

Clue Word Instruction

Clue word instruction is a valuable learning tool for students of all abilities. Clue words help students process the organization of a text. “Important text elements [clue words] are learned and remembered better because of the additional attention they receive” (Spire, 1992, p. 308). “Ideas marked by . . . the occurrence of signal words and phrases are processed longer and recalled better than unsignaled information” (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000, p. 317). Being able to recognize clue words helps students recognize abstract text patterns. “Authors often showcase text patterns by giving readers clues or signals to help them figure out the structure being used. . . . A signal may be a word or a phrase that helps the reader follow the writer’s thoughts” (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 398). The following works provide clue word instructions: **Focus** on Understanding Sequence, Recognizing Cause and Effect, and Comparing and Contrasting. This information appears in the Learn About section of each of these book. Students are given a list of clue words, which they will see in context in the lessons. Explicit and direct instruction of clue words will promote students’ abilities to achieve mastery of the particular reading strategy.

Cause (Why?)

The Pilgrims had no bricks to build their homes.



Effect (What?)

They built their homes out of wood.

Graphic organizers aid in comprehension because they are concrete, memorable representations of abstract thinking processes.

Graphic Organizers

Another means of identifying text structures, and therefore comprehending the reading strategy that students should use to comprehend that text structure, is the use of graphic organizers. Graphic organizers can be used to visually present the pattern of information in a text. This pattern of information reflects the text structure of a selection. "Visual structures are powerful tools for comprehension instruction because they offer concrete, memorable representations of abstract thinking processes (Alvermann & Boothby, 1986; Calfee & Patrick, 1995; Norton, 1992)" (Barton & Sawyer, 2003).

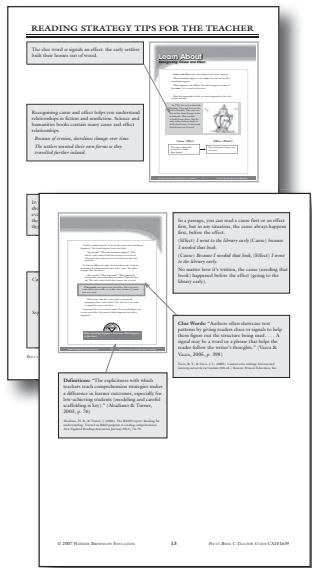
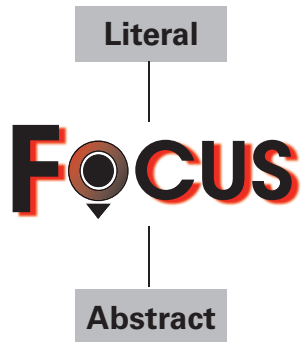
Each **FOCUS** book provides a graphic organizer that represents the text structure specific to the targeted reading strategy. Graphic organizers are helpful because they ". . . are visual and spatial displays designed to facilitate the teaching and learning of textual material through the 'use of lines, arrows, and a spatial arrangement that describe text content, structure, and key conceptual relationships' " (Darch & Eaves, 1986, p. 310). They can be used to illuminate the reading strategy for the students.

WHY ARE THESE READING STRATEGIES IMPORTANT FOR READING COMPREHENSION?

FOCUS provides practice with reading strategies because these strategies are the core reading tools that students need in order to make sense of what they are reading. ". . . [M]any students have demonstrated difficulties with skills that are central to reading comprehension (i.e., identifying main topics, significant supporting information, and relations between a text's main topics" (Seidenberg, 1989). The reading strategies or the skills involved in the reading strategies of Understanding Main Idea and Details, Understanding Sequence, Recognizing Cause and Effect, Comparing and Contrasting, Making Predictions, and Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences may be difficult for some students to master because the thinking processes involved in applying the strategies are abstract in nature. These reading strategies represent the unseen text structure of a reading passage. "When students are shown how to see relationships among concepts and bits of essential information, they are in a better position to respond to meaning and to distinguish important from less important ideas" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 393). **FOCUS** instructs and reinforces the text structures that students encounter in and outside of school.

Reading Strategy	Book A (1-2-3)	Book B (4-5-6)	Book C (7-8-9)	Book D (10-11-12)	Book E (13-14-15)	Book F (16-17-18)	Book G (19-20-21)	Book H (22-23-24)
Understanding Main Idea and Details	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Understanding Sequence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognizing Cause and Effect	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comparing and Contrasting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Making Predictions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

"When students are shown how to see relationships among concepts and bits of essential information, they are in a better position to respond to meaning and to distinguish important from less important ideas" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 393).



Reading Strategy Tips for Teachers provides additional support for reading-strategy instruction.

FOCUS covers essential reading strategies that pertain to text structures. Learning how to understand main ideas and details has considerable research support. Kameenui & Simmons (1998) provide an extensive overview of main idea research: “The ability to identify main topics, significant supporting information, and interrelations among a text’s main ideas are processes that appear central to comprehension” (Lorch & Lorch, cited in Seidenberg, 1989; Miller & Kintsch, cited in Seidenberg, 1989). “Textbook main idea studies suggest instruction in techniques for locating main ideas to be valuable for improved textbook comprehension, especially in dealing with difficult passages” (O’Hear & Aikman, 1996). Warren and Fitzgerald (1997) summarize the importance of main idea reading instruction: It is commonly believed that identification or generation of main ideas and supporting details is crucial to making meaning while reading and to recall after reading (Hare & Milligan, 1984; Memory, 1983). There is evidence of a clear positive relationship between main-idea knowledge and overall understanding from reading (Baumann, 1984; Winograd, 1984). However, many poorer readers do not configure main ideas and details well (Bridge, Belmore, Moskow, Cohen, & Matthews, 1984; Brown & Day, 1983; Winograd, 1984). Such students might profit from help from others in identifying and generating main ideas and details in expository text. Several intervention approaches, such as direct instruction in getting main ideas, have been shown to enhance fifth graders’ through college students’ ability to get main ideas when reading (Alvermann, 1982; Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1987; Baumann, 1984; Bridge, Belmore, Moskow, Cohen, & Matthews, 1984; Guri-Rozenblit, 1989; Memory, 1983; Moore & Cunningham, 1984; Williams, 1986).

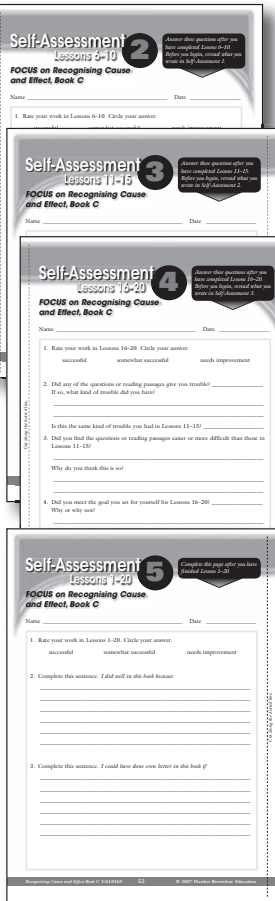
In another literature review, Kameenui & Simmons (1998, p. 255) offer the following reasons why understanding sequence, cause and effect, and comparing and contrasting are critical for reading comprehension. “Student awareness of structural patterns in expository writing (e.g., sequence, causation, comparison/contrast) facilitated recall of not only more text information, but more theses or main ideas” (Seidenberg, 1989). The drawing conclusions and making inferences involve abstract inferencing reading strategies and are more difficult to teach. “Inferencing is a natural part of language use, usually based on children’s knowledge of the world (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). To get children to be better able to make inferences during reading may involve little more than encouraging them to do so. Hansen (1981) found that increasing the percentage of inferential questions asked during a lesson was just as effective as a direct instruction inference training program in improving children’s ability to answer inference questions” (Stahl, 1998, p. 44). Researchers have proven that these core reading strategies are essential in gaining reading comprehension. **FOCUS** presents the necessary learning tools and practice opportunities to insure that students experience success in reading comprehension.

HOW DOES RESEARCH SUPPORT THE ASSESSMENTS FOUND IN FOCUS?

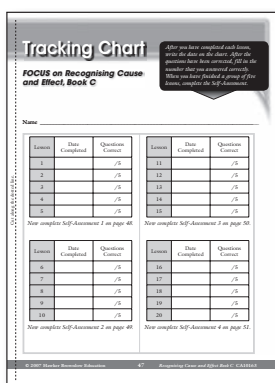
FOCUS is a flexible instructional classroom tool to use because of the formative assessments teachers use in the series: student self-assessment and teacher assessment through conferencing, as well as selected and constructed assessments. Research supports the use of these types of assessments because they are significant in increasing a student's self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy is "people's judgement of their abilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (p. 391). When a student's self-efficacy is raised, so is his or her willingness to engage in that activity. Both struggling and on-level readers benefit from increased self-efficacy.

Student Self-Assessment

Student self-assessment is not only a motivational tool but also one that encourages students to take on more responsibility for their learning. Giving students more control over their learning is an empowering instructional tool. "Students need to play a role in the assessment of their own literacy products and processes" (Vacca & Vacca, 2005, p. 49). Once students are actively engaged in their learning, their self-efficacy is boosted. "When made explicit to the student, the realization of increased skill should increase efficacy for future reading tasks. This realization by the student that one is becoming a better reader could begin a positive motivational cycle where increases in reading efficacy would lead to increases in reading activity and the reading of more difficult material, which would further develop reading skill" (Quirk & Schwanenflugel, 2004, p. 8). The Self-Assessments and Tracking Chart are designed to give students immediate feedback on their performance. The Tracking Chart is a visual tool students can use to discuss their progress with the teacher. The Self-Assessments bring in self-regulation and monitoring. The Self-Assessment questions make students' thoughts explicit to themselves so that they may make conscious decisions about their learning progress.



Students gain reading confidence and motivation to succeed through self-monitoring.



Tracking Chart

Teacher Assessment 1 (Use Teacher Assessment 1 on page 20 of this teacher guide.)

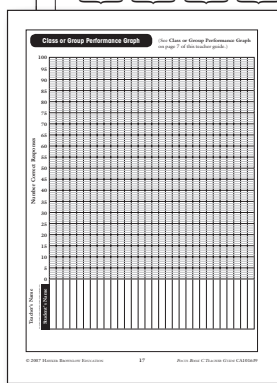
Assessment Name: _____ Teacher's Name: _____

Group / Lesson	Number Correct Responses	Percentage Correct Responses
Group 1 Lesson 1-4		
Lesson 1	18	%
Lesson 2	18	%
Lesson 3	18	%
Lesson 4	18	%
Lesson 5	18	%
Group Total	90	%
Group 2 Lesson 6-10		
Lesson 6	18	%
Lesson 7	18	%
Lesson 8	18	%
Lesson 9	18	%
Lesson 10	18	%
Group Total	90	%
Group 3 Lesson 11-15		
Lesson 11	18	%
Lesson 12	18	%
Lesson 13	18	%
Lesson 14	18	%
Lesson 15	18	%
Group Total	90	%

Teacher Assessment 2 (Use Teacher Assessment 2 on page 21 of this teacher guide.)

Student's Name: _____

Student's Name: _____



Teacher Assessments

Students benefit from teacher interaction as they progress through the FOCUS program.

Classroom Performance Graph (Use Classroom Performance Graph on page 23 of this teacher guide.)

Classroom Performance Graph

1. Why does a magnet pick up paperclips?

2. If you put the south pole of a second magnet near the south pole of a first-magnet paperclip...

3. Which one word or words signed the reason why paperclips stick to any magnet that comes near them?

4. The boxes tell what happens when you put two magnets near each other. What belongs in the empty box?

5. Answer the question that begins the experiment. What happens when you push two magnets near each other? Use a class word.

Selected-Response and Constructed-Response Questioning

These discussions would make students more aware of individual progress toward their reading goals and support a growing belief that with effort they are capable of improving.” Through **FOCUS**, students engage in several types of assessments. Along with teacher interaction and guidance, these assessments foster positive results for students in terms of personal fulfillment and academic achievement.

Selected-Response and Constructed-Response Questioning

FOCUS is a reading-practice series that incorporates question formats that reflect those found on national and state standardized tests. The practice of answering questions in a testing format bridges a testing gap students may have. By providing practice with test-question formats, **FOCUS** may reduce test anxiety in students. “Students of all levels of academic achievement and intellectual abilities can be affected by test anxiety (Sarason, Davidson, Lighthall, Waite, & Ruebush, 1960)” (Supon, 2004, p. 292). Supon and other researchers suggest that one method of alleviating test anxiety is to provide practice with test-question formats. With practice, students become comfortable with the question formats that are connected with high-stakes testing. This is significant because “cognitive test anxiety exerts a significant stable and negative impact on academic performance measures” (Cassady & Johnson, 2002, p. 294). **FOCUS** provides students with the opportunity not only to master each reading strategy but also to overcome any testing anxiety they may have.

SUMMARY

FOCUS is a reading-strategy practice series that aids all students, including struggling readers, to achieve reading comprehension success. Mastery of core reading strategies

is a difficult task to fulfill because in doing so, students must learn to identify abstract, often invisible, text structures in reading passages. **FOCUS** makes reading comprehension attainable by providing concrete tools for students to use in identifying abstract text structures. With repeated practice and exposure to fiction and nonfiction genres, students become automatic in their ability to use the reading strategy to identify the structure of a reading selection. **FOCUS** is grounded in well-researched teaching and learning strategies, which means that teachers will engage their students with an educationally sound reading-practice program.

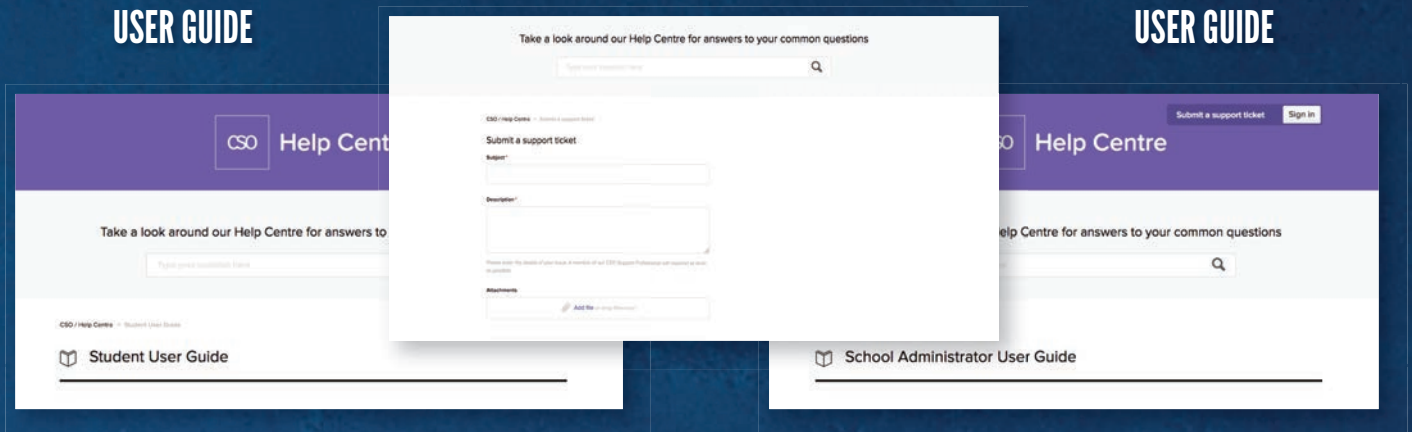
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