

## Reading Strategy—DETERMINE IMPORTANT IDEAS Some Suggestions

**Goal: To encourage students to focus on all aspects of the reading to identify important parts of the text and to identify examples, big ideas and underlying themes.**

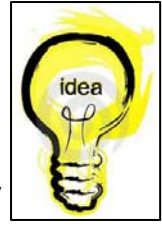
### Determining Important Ideas...

1. Guides students to differentiate between essential and non-essential information in a reading passage;
2. Helps students identify the main point of a reading and evidence that supports it;
3. Leads students to determine the author's purpose or purposes.
4. It is IMPORTANT...
  - To apply the strategy to a variety of readings—textbooks, news articles, instructions and directions—comparing the way to find the main idea in each;
  - To realize that disagreement about the most important point in a reading is OK—getting students to read carefully, arrive at well-reasoned conclusions and argue their points from the reading is of greatest value;
  - To help students set purposes for themselves that will remind them to be alert to the author's purpose, e.g. KWL;
  - To use pre-existing knowledge about content topics to scaffold students' learning;
  - To require students to state important ideas in their own words.

### Tools for DETERMINING IMPORTANT IDEAS...

- The **Finding the Main Point Activity** helps students understand what is most important in their reading by determining how different parts of the reading interrelate.
- The **K-W-L Activity** helps students set reading purposes for themselves.

## Finding the Main Point Activity



**Goal: To help students discover what is most important in their reading, by Understanding how different parts of the text interrelate.**

- I. Working with a photocopied page or two of fairly straightforward text (or with sticky notes within the reading itself) students should follow the 1-2-3 Method.
- Place a **1** beside the **main idea** of the reading.
    - This is why the author wrote the selection.
      - Often this is found in the first paragraph or the concluding paragraph.
  - Place a **2** beside **supporting information** in the reading.
    - This can be a list of examples, facts that support the main idea, details that show how the conclusion was reached, etc.
      - These help the reader to understand the main idea.
  - Place a **3** beside **clarifying material** in the reading.
    - Quotations that illustrate examples, details or facts, sources confirming information, graphics that expand upon points that the text describes, etc.
      - The author included these to give the reader more detail about the topic.

- II. Students discuss their choices in small groups then report out their thoughts to the entire class.
- Be sure students follow along in the reading during the discussion.
  - Write students' ideas for all to see.
  - Ask a student to read aloud sentences or paragraphs under discussion.
  - Highlight differences among students' ideas.

- III. Provide time for students to review the connections between the presentation and the information they have learned, including how this relationship differs from other readings.
- Note:** The exercise will differ from reading to reading and from subject to subject. In history, the main idea may be the reason for the failure of the League of Nations (1). There will be a list of causes (2s) and quotations or statistics (3s). In science, the main idea may be the understanding of a definition such as osmosis (1). There will be concepts such as "cell membrane" that need to be understood (2s) and illustrations or diagrams (3s).