

# Challenges and Benefits of Schoolwide Professional Development: Improving Content Area Reading in Middle School

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## Aim

Through the Middle School Matters (MSM) initiative, improve the following:

- Teachers' content area reading comprehension instruction
- Students' reading comprehension in the content areas

## Professional Development Components

### High-Quality Initial Professional Development

- Get the gist comprehension strategy
- Question-writing comprehension strategy

### In-Class Modeling by MSM Coach

- Modeled at least once in each content area
- Teachers observe modeling sessions

### Professional Learning Community Meetings Led by MSM Coach

- Held every 2 weeks, 20 minutes each
- Organized by subject area or grade level (school's choice)
- Deepen learning of participants, who plan together and share

### High-Quality Tools and Resources

- MSM Field Guide (<https://greatmiddleschools.org/resources/field-guide>)
- Classroom-ready tools

## Participants

- Treatment: 46 teachers across two campuses
- Business as usual: Seven teachers at one campus

## Measures

- Dosage Survey: Teacher self-report of weekly strategy use
- Get the Gist Social Validity Measure: Teacher self-report of impact on instruction
- Question Writing Social Validity Measure: Teacher self-report of impact on instruction

## Implementation Timeline for Each Strategy

- Before Week 1: Initial professional development and pretest
- Week 1: In-class modeling
- Week 2: In-class guided practice
- Weeks 3–12: Use strategy:
  - Implementation goal twice per week
  - Professional learning communities every 2 weeks
- Week 13: Posttest

Even with very positive teacher perceptions of the professional development and follow-along support, teachers did not consistently implement. Implementation increased somewhat when teachers applied strategies to media or lecture content in addition to reading text.



## Results

### Gist Social Validity Measure

Teachers had overall positive perceptions of the feasibility and appropriateness of the get the gist strategy. However, only 48% reported that it improved their instruction.

### Question Writing Social Validity Measure

Teachers had overall positive perceptions of the feasibility and appropriateness of the question writing strategy. Most (63%) reported that it improved their instruction.

### Dosage Survey

Though implementation increased over time for each strategy, the number of teachers hitting the target implementation rate by the end of the 12-week period was relatively low:

- Get the gist: 33%
- Question writing: 50%

### Get the Gist Strategy

#### How is it done?

**Step 1:** Who or what is this section about?

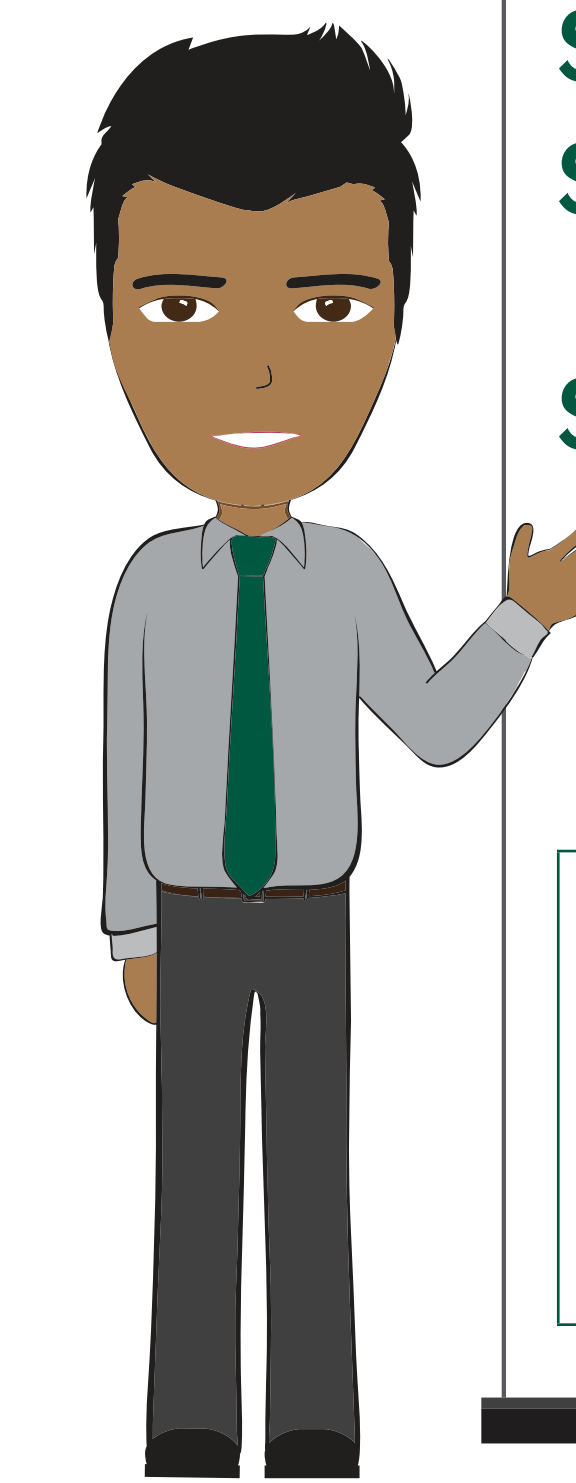
**Step 2:** What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?

**Step 3:** Write a gist statement that combines the information from steps 1 and 2.

(The gist should be in students' own words, rather than a sentence copied from the text.)

#### Giant Gist

Write a three- to four-sentence summary of the entire passage, combining gist statements and containing the most important information about the entire passage.



### Question Writing Strategy

#### How is it done?

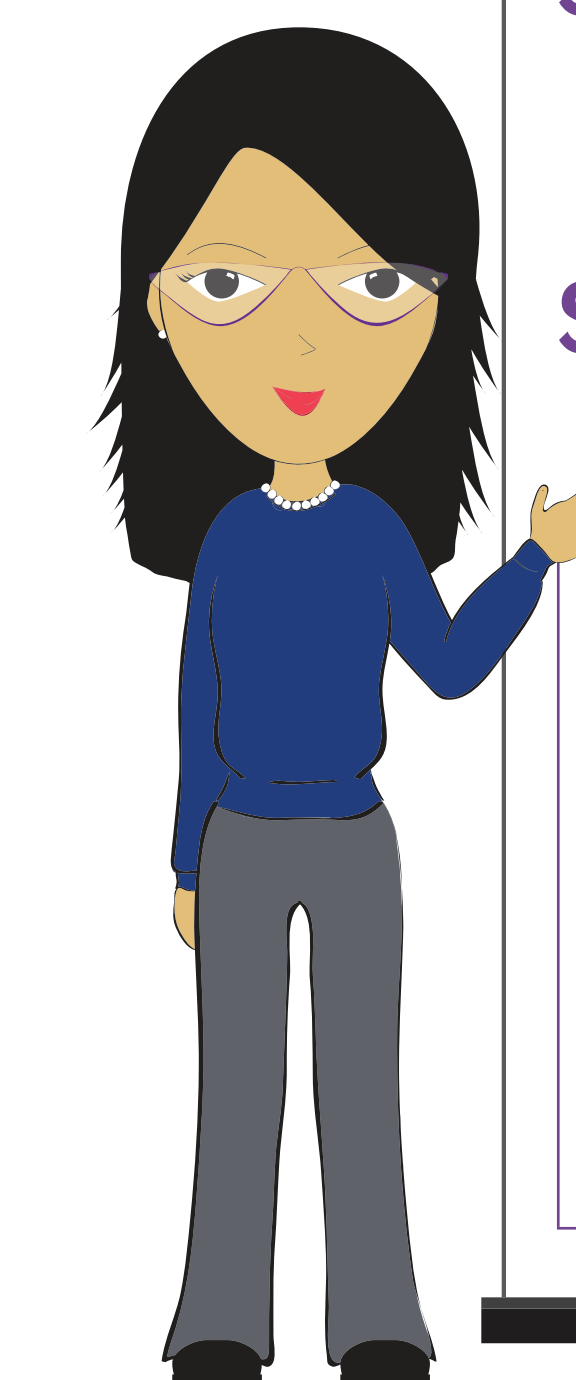
**Step 1:** Students read a text or learn new information, either in small groups, pairs, or independently.

**Step 2:** Students pause at regular intervals to generate their own questions and write the questions in a log or notebook.

**Step 3:** Students answer their questions and cite text evidence.

#### Question Types

- **Specific questions:** Can be answered in one word or sentence, word-for-word from text
- **Wide questions:** Answers require more than one sentence, using ideas from multiple places in the text and prior knowledge



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