SESSION 4: NARRATIVE AND INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Introduction | Narrative Text | Informational Text | Look Ahead

Introduction

Let us read with method, and propose to ourselves an end to which our studies may point. The use of reading is to aid us in thinking.
— Edward Gibbon

Overview

In the previous session, you explored different strategies for implementing vocabulary instruction in your content area lessons. In this session, you will explore concepts and numerous strategies for "reading to learn" by using narrative and informational texts.

Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

• Describe a student who struggles with reading in your content area.
• Analyze student cases and discuss strategies to overcome the students' difficulties to read content-area texts.
• Reflect on the strategies demonstrated by the teacher in the "Think-Aloud" video.
• Plan how you will use the think-aloud strategy and which texts you would choose and why.
• Write a plan for how you will implement two narrative and informational text strategies in your classroom instruction in the Reading to Learn Strategies Chart.

If you haven't done so already, print the Assignment Checklist to keep track of your assignments for this session.
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Introduction | Narrative Text | Informational Text | Look Ahead

Narrative Text

Narrative text is writing in which a story is told; the details may be fictional or based on fact. Typically, the events described in narrative text are written sequentially. The primary purpose of narrative writing is to entertain. Novels depict numerous episodes of action. Short stories may only contain a few or even one episode. Nevertheless, both relate a causal chain of events: each event in the story leads to another, as the protagonist, or main character, tries to reach a goal or solve a problem.

Elements that are basic to narrative text include: setting, characters, plot, conflict, and theme. Some literary experts label these elements "story grammar." That is, just as sentence grammar is used to explain and specify how sentences are constructed, story grammar delineates the basic parts of a story and how those work together to create a well-constructed tale (Vacca and Vacca, 1993).

Narrative Text Strategies

The following two strategies are designed to help students read and understand narrative texts.

1. Directed Reading/Thinking Activity (Stauffer, 1969) is similar to the K-W-L activity you completed in Session 1. It can be used before, during, and after reading. It is a versatile activity that gives students practice in active reading skills. It involves the following processes: activating prior knowledge, predicting, reading, and checking the accuracy of their predictions. Review the DR/TA template. As you review the template, think about a narrative text selection that your students would read and how you could use it with the DR/TA strategy.

2. Story grammar identifies the story's structure, literary elements, and their relationship to one another. A Story Map (Beck & McKeown, 1981) is a visual representation of the story structure and can be used during or after reading. Students find these graphic organizers helpful in sequencing and explaining the elements of different narrative texts.

Differentiated Instruction

Story mapping is a fairly simple process that is already used in many classrooms. The power of this reading strategy, however, comes from the way it can help teachers facilitate a deeper understanding of a text for their students. For example, letting students create their own graphic organizers that contain the essential elements of a story map can help students make even more connections between story elements. Using story mapping in social studies to break apart the elements of specific events and episode in history can help students
organize information and see historical connections they may have otherwise missed. Explore Teaching Today for additional ideas for differentiating instruction in social studies.

Go to the discussion forum and engage in an online discussion by responding to the following:

Think about a student you have taught who finds it hard to read content-area texts. Provide a brief description of the student (grade-level, background, etc.) and describe a specific instance when the student struggled to read content-area text.

In your response to your peers, provide advice and suggestions for how they may address their student's needs by using the content in this course. Remember to refer to the readings and strategies to support your advice.

As you complete the rest of the readings and assignments for this session, you should visit this discussion forum at least two or three times to continue the discussion. You may refer to the discussion forum rubric to review the expectations for participating in online discussions in this course.
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Introduction | Narrative Text | Informational Text | Look Ahead

Informational Text

Informational text is typically written to inform or persuade. Some teachers call informational text expository text. Examples of informational text are textbook chapters, newspaper and magazine articles, and reference material. The ideas contained in informational text can be organized in a number of different ways.

Informational Text Strategies

The following strategies are designed to help students read and understand informational texts:

1. Group summaries help students review and remember information. Students read the text, discuss, and record information as a group. Summarizing information requires readers to distinguish between key concepts and subordinate ideas. It also requires the ability to condense information (Brown, Day & Jones, 1983). Summarizing is a sophisticated skill; therefore, modeling this skill is critical.
2. The Pre-reading Plan (Langer, 1981) provides a framework for activating and extending prior knowledge. Before reading a text, students think about what they know about a concept. This prompt helps them make those connections they may not have realized they had.
3. SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) (Robinson, 1961) is a versatile study strategy because it engages students during each phase of the reading process. Students preview the text material to develop predictions and to set a purpose for reading by generating questions about the topic; they read actively, searching for answers to those questions; they monitor their comprehension as they summarize; and they evaluate their comprehension through review activities. Thus, this strategy is used before, during, and after reading.
4. "Think-Alouds" (Davey, 1983) help students understand the kind of thinking required by a specific task. The teacher models her thinking process by verbalizing her thoughts as she reads, processes information, or performs some learning task. Students see how the teacher attempts to construct meaning for unfamiliar vocabulary, engages in dialogue with the author, or recognizes when she doesn't comprehend and selects a "fix-up" strategy that addresses the problem. Ineffective readers especially benefit from observing what skilled readers think about while reading.
5. Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1985) is a strategy in which students learn the skills of summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting well enough to perform as an "instructor of content." When students become adept at these four skills, they not only instruct one another but also learn metacomprehension skills they can use while reading independently. The components of this strategy foster learning before, during, and after reading.
6. Structured Note-Taking (Smith & Tompkins, 1988) helps students take notes more effectively. Over 50% of the material that students read or hear in class is forgotten in a matter of minutes (Vacc & Vacc, 1993). Therefore, using a note-taking system that assists in recall and retention of information is essential. "Structured note-taking" is one of a variety of note-taking strategies; however, it offers students a visual...
framework that can help them determine just which information to include as they take notes. Initially, the teacher provides students with a graphic organizer that mimics the organizational pattern in the text to be read. Eventually, as students practice this skill, they learn to devise their own graphic organizers. Structured note-taking is used before, during, and after reading. See an example of Structured Note-Taking.

**Technology Tip**

Learning Resources: Graphic Organizers explores using graphic organizers in the classroom, includes an informative article by Jamie McKenzie, and has resources for creating graphic organizers with technology. Don't forget to try generating your own graphic organizer using the Graphic Organizer Tool.

**Modeling Informational Text Strategies**

With the informational text strategies in mind, watch the “SQ3R” video of a teacher teaching the steps of this model. As you watch, notice how the teacher cues the students on each part of the SQ3R. Also, look for how the students become actively engaged in the text by using this strategy.

Now watch the "Think-Aloud" video. As you watch, notice which coping strategies the teacher explicitly models.

Read "Content Area Textbooks: Friends or Foes." As you read, think about two or three key pieces of information that are new to you and the impact this will have on your instruction.

After viewing the videos and reading the "Content Area Textbooks: Friends or Foes?" article, respond to the following in your online journal:

Which strategies did the teacher model in the "Think-Aloud" video?

How could you use this strategy with your student population?

What type of texts would you choose for this strategy and why?

**Reading to Learn Strategies Chart Assignment (Sessions 3-5)**

Continue to complete the Reading to Learn Strategies Chart you began in Session 3. Now, select two narrative and informational text strategies from Session 4 for use in your chart. Please use the template you began in Session 3.

You will submit the Reading to Learn Strategies Chart to your facilitator at the end of Session 5. You may refer to the Reading to Learn Strategies Chart rubric to review the expectations
for completing this assignment.

Additional Resources (not required)

Story Map interactive
This interactive from Read Write Think can be used in multiple contexts and with a range of grade levels. There are also multiple lesson plans that use the interactive.

L517: Advanced Study of the Teaching of Secondary School Reading
This page offers a description, purpose, "how to," and an example of a pre-reading plan.

Reciprocal Teaching
This page from ReadingQuest explores how reciprocal teaching "is in some ways a compilation of four comprehension strategies."

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory: Reciprocal Teaching
This page explores reciprocal teaching in-depth.

Structured Note-Taking
This page, which details the "Handout 9: Strategy 3-Structured Note-Taking" from ASCD, provides an overview of the process.

Structured Note-Taking for History
This page, "Overhead 5: Structured Note Taking for History," is also from ASCD, and shows a detailed example of structured note-taking.

Citations

Billmeyer, R., & Barton, M. L. (1998). Teaching reading in the content areas: If not me, then who? (2nd ed.). Aurora, CO: Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory.

Look Ahead

In Session 6, you will complete your final project. You should be working on your project as you complete each session of the course. Remember to review the final project rubric to understand the project requirements.

Throughout this course, you have been asked to reflect on what you have read and learned. Reflecting on new information is an essential part of the learning process. In Session 5, you will be introduced to reflection strategies that help students organize, use, question, and discuss content area knowledge they acquire through reading.