

Elementary Comprehension Portfolio

Standards and Strategies

- **Standard 1: (CCSS) RI.2.1-- Second Grade Reading: Informational Text**

- *Key Ideas and Details*

After initial assessments and monitoring students' skills, students in my classroom struggle with comprehending information from Nonfiction/Informational texts. The CCSS outlines standard **RI.2.1-- Second Grade Reading: Informational Text** as, "Ask and answer questions as *who, what, where, when, why, and how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text." The **Corresponding College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard (CCR)** is outlined as having the ability to, "Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text."

- **Strategy 1: Teaching Elements of Informational Texts**

An important first strategy for teaching students how to comprehend nonfiction/informational texts is by teaching students the elements that make up an informational text. This strategy is important because it will allow students to be familiar with themes, patterns, and characteristics of informational texts. This will help them determine text genre and the specific lense necessary for proper comprehension.

In order for students to succeed with this strategy, the first lesson implemented was through basic genre recognition. I started the lesson by explaining the term genre and how it relates to literature. After explaining genre, I then went on to explaining categories within genre. For example, nonfiction is a genre category but it is not necessarily all-encompassing. I went on

to explain that nonfiction can include different sub categories. After this explanation, I posted up papers in the classroom that gave the basic definition and an example for each genre.

During the second lesson, students were then asked to categorize the different texts we have read into the genre categories. For example, we have read many texts in our curriculum and students were already familiar with the readings; thus, whenever I introduced them to genre, they were much more likely to be able to group the texts into the appropriate categories. This sorting was performed during a small group, guided reading lesson. Students were then given a list of texts with a summary of that text and asked to determine the specific genre of each. After students were allowed autonomy to determine genre, the group was brought back together to discuss misunderstandings and to debate whether or not each text was placed into the correct category.

Students were not becoming familiar with genre; so, I proceeded to explaining the different aspects of an informational text. Being that this strategy relates more to an idea rather than a practice, students were just asked to take physical and mental notes of the different aspects of an informational text. I explained that informational texts are a subcategory of nonfiction and that their purpose is simple; to make the reader aware of pertinent information regarding a given topic. Students were then asked to note that informational texts: give specific, factual information about a given topic, do not have characters, and do not follow a normal story plot, but rather gives main ideas regarding a topic. After students were made familiar with the different characteristics of these text types, we continued to explore texts within our guided reading groups and determined if they were informational or not based on the previously described criteria. The CKLA reader that outlined the War of 1812 was used for this activity to

solidify students' ideas regarding informational text. This strategy was very important to my students, and allowed them to develop their skills in comprehending informational texts. They were actually able to understand the texts, their purpose, and the elements that comprised the texts. This strategy was more of a practice skill and had not received a particular sequence; progression was based on student understanding which varied among groups. Introducing this strategy first will help students build a foundation of knowledge within informational texts that will be developed further with the strategies and techniques to come.

- **Standard 2: (CCSS) RI.2.6-- Second Grade Reading: Informational Text**
 - *Craft and Structure*

The CCSS outlines standard **RI.2.2-- Second Grade Reading: Informational Text** as, “Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.” The **Corresponding College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard (CCR)** is outlined as having the ability to, “Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.”

- **Strategy 2: Citing Textual Evidence**

The second strategy that I will use with my students is citing textual evidence in order to fully comprehend an informational text. The standard associated asks students to be able to summarize these texts; thus, being able to cite and support evidence from a text could be extremely helpful. This strategy was also presented based on personal experiences teaching second grade. If a story is read and comprehension questions are asked, my students often always will present an answer; however, whenever I ask a follow-up question or a “how do you know that?” they tend to be thrown off. With this obvious gap in knowledge, I would like to present

students with more opportunities to engage with textual evidence. Students are exposed to text retrieval methods through the CKLA curriculum; for example, when answering comprehension questions they have to identify the page number where the evidence for the answer can be found. However, this is not a common strategy used within the curriculum and I would like to use it within my guided reading groups.

For this strategy, I will use the book “Volcanoes” by Karen Alexander. This book is a Level J on the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System and will be fairly manageable for all of the students within the class. The first lesson, students will watch as I model annotations of the book. For example, I would have the document printed in paper format, and read through the text highlighting important information or ideas that I did not understand. After annotating the assignment with students, I would proceed to asking different comprehension questions regarding the text; such as, “Is volcanic eruption good or bad for the soil around it?” This question is derived straight from the book and would be fairly simple to find. If by chance a student answers the question before looking back within the text, I would model a think-aloud strategy that would encourage “double-checking” work. Furthermore, I would demonstrate the need to go back within the text and highlight key words and phrases related to the questions. This opportunity would allow for students to become familiar with using textual evidence and understand its importance.

For the second lesson, I would use the same text, however this time I would ask students to join me in annotating the document; rather than performing the task as a model, I would allow students to use their own passage(s) from the text and highlight their own key words, phrases, and questions. After students annotate their documents, I would ask them to partner up with

someone within their groups and compare annotations, allowing for extra time to add or take away important/less important information. After students had annotated the documents, we would review the process of finding the answer to another text-dependent question; such as, “What is the difference in magma and lava?” After discussing questions with the whole group, I would conclude the lesson, not wanting to overload students with skill strategies. This would help strengthen their confidence in text evidence retrieval and allow for breaks between built knowledge.

For the third lesson, students would be asked to bring their previously annotated documents back to the group for further discussion except this time we would work on summarization. Building off of the first standard and strategy, students would be familiar with the general idea of a summary within an informational text; thus, they would be partially familiar with summarization techniques. Although they would still be familiar, I would want to touch base on summaries again, particularly with finding important phrases and ideas within the text and supporting that with the words within. We would come together as a group and determine the most important things within the text, and create a group document that would live as a working piece. This summary would include key ideas that could be supported with textual evidence.

After students were made familiar with the process of retrieving information from a text, I would start to release responsibility to the students to manage these questions and summaries on their own. Students would be put back into their particular groups with texts on their level and asked to give weekly summaries as well as answer whole-group comprehension questions. On Fridays, after a week of guided reading instruction, students would then take a short, 5-10

question comprehension quiz with the opportunity to summarize the text; they would be required to use evidence from the text to support their summaries. Being that they are still developing skills, I would only require a page number as evidence for retrieval.

- **Standard 3: (CCSS) RI.2.10-- Second Grade Reading: Informational Text**
 - *Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity*

The CCSS outlines standard **RI.2.10-- Second Grade Reading: Informational Text** as, “By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.” The **Corresponding College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard (CCR)** is outlined as having the ability to, “Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently. This standard is vital to students' success at comprehending Nonfiction/Informational texts.”

- **Strategy 3: Reciprocal Teaching**

The third strategy that I will implement with my guided reading groups is through reciprocal teaching. Lori Oczkus defines this strategy as, “a scaffolded, or supported, discussion technique that incorporates four main strategies—predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing—that good readers use together to comprehend text (2018). This strategy focuses on a more ‘holistic’ understanding of a text and relies on student’s to do the majority of the lifting. This strategy has been implemented throughout the year, and has been very engaging to the students.

It is a necessity for students to be exposed to grade appropriate content even if their skills are behind grade level. Thus, I utilize the grade specific content that students are exposed to

when implementing my reciprocal teaching strategies to maintain consistency among all students. For the first lesson, we utilized the 2nd Grade Reader in the CKLA curriculum that highlights historical information and is nonfiction based. The specific reader that was used for this activity was within Unit 6 and highlighted the War of 1812. Students would be exposed to historical information and allowed to develop comprehension skills within informational texts.

Implementing this technique was tricky at first, but gradually became less difficult the more students used the tool. At first, I presented students with the rationale for using such a chart. I started by highlighting each strategy; for example, students were exposed to the meaning of predict, question, clarify, and summarize. I created an exemplar chart for them to reference, as well as an anchor chart that highlighted the different aspects necessary to fill out the chart correctly. After students were familiar with the terms and their meaning, I then proceeded to using the chart with my guided reading groups, utilizing our textbook to provide familiarity between what they were learning and the new strategy being presented.

For the first few lessons, students were led in a guided practice where I was modeling the appropriate ways to complete the comprehension chart. Students followed along while I used think aloud techniques and modeling to further their understanding of how to go through a text and find information. In the first lesson students were exposed to predicting. I showed students to look at the cover and the back of the book to make inferences, or predict, what the text would be about. We then completed the first box of the chart and showed how that would benefit our understanding. I also explained that our predictions could either be validated or disproven. For example, students know that sometimes our predictions could be false, or that we may learn that our predictions are correct and we can make that connection.

After students practiced the predict strategy, which is a pre-read activity, we delved right into the text and discussed the clarify and define strategies. The define strategy was perhaps the easier of the two to implement. We started to read through our text, and I would write down words that could be potentially challenging to understand and encouraged students to do the same. After our first reading together, we compared the differences in our charts and the similarities between words unknown among the group. Once we were able to identify words in the first chapter that were difficult to understand, I then proceeded to show students different ways to use contextual clues in order to gain meaning, or simply discussed the definition with them depending upon the word. Showing students how to implement the clarify strategy was difficult. Students were told that throughout stories there would be different questions that would come up within the reading which may need room for clarification. I modeled different questions that could come up within the story, continuing to use think-aloud strategies to model for students. One of the biggest challenges for this technique was the ambiguity of questioning. There is not a set of right or wrong questions that can be asked; thus, it is difficult to explain that questions are variant upon the individual and cannot be right or wrong.

The summary strategy is a strategy that will continue to be worked on, as it is the most difficult of the strategies. Before implementing this strategy in my fourth lesson, I explained the main idea, author's purpose, and other text features that would be beneficial to understanding the text. Students were exposed to the idea that summaries should be completed as a post-read activity. I modeled for students appropriate ways to find important information within the text and how to use concise thoughts to limit word vomit. It was important for me to highlight that summarization was not a chance to retell every single detail within a story, but to rather find the

important ideas and main purposes for the reading. Again, I used think aloud techniques when writing my summary to show students my thought process.

Students, now familiar with the four reciprocal teaching strategies, were then asked to develop their own comprehension chart for the next chapter. Students were in need of support, and thus, this opportunity was used for guided practice and individualized support. I started my fifth lesson by briefly explaining the chart and how to use it, and then allowed students autonomy for completing the activity. I kept the groups small, 5-6 students, so that I could closely monitor and correct any issues that they may come across when trying to complete their comprehension chart. Upon completion of the reading and chart by each student, I then led the groups in a discussion. This provided an opportunity for students to see each other's work and thought processes. Students were asked to compare their chart with their shoulder partner and analyze any similarities and differences. After the share activity, students were brought back together as a group to develop another comprehension chart that had every individual's contributions on it. Students retained their personal comprehension charts for future reference, and the groups chart was posted on the wall as well for future reference.

Students were given support for the first 10 lessons, 5 per week, in order to build their confidence and ability in independent work. After the 10th lesson, students were required to complete the comprehension chart on their own. However, I still provided support and scaffolding for students that were in need of support and continued to model as necessary. While students are now required to complete this activity on their own, I always implement opportunities for peer review. Students acquire an abundance of new techniques and ideas from their peers, so this has been very beneficial.

The framework used was a Gradual Release of Responsibility. Students were asked to follow along while I modeled and performed the heavy lifting of the assignment, then students were asked to develop their own charts with support, gradually reaching the point that we are at now to where students are able to complete the activity on their own and will only receive feedback on their finished charts.

Conclusion

It is evident in my classroom that students are in need of instruction surrounding nonfiction and informational texts. These strategies have been used in my instruction; however, now that I have established a more clear framework for implementing them they will be much more effective. All of the skills necessary for a student to have strong comprehension within this particular genre build on one another, so it will be important to utilize previous knowledge in new instructional practices. I plan to teach students the elements of these texts, how to cite and utilize text evidence, and reciprocal teaching to help support students' comprehension techniques. It is my hope that next year I can develop my own instructional practices and utilize this portfolio fully in an attempt to bridge the comprehension gaps of students within the nonfiction/informational text genre.

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