

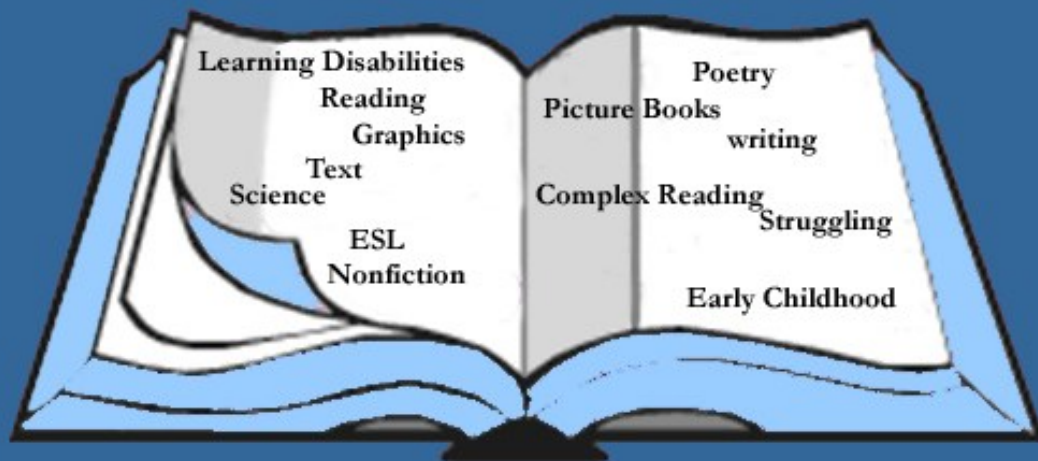
Teachers on the Cutting Edge

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Informational Texts

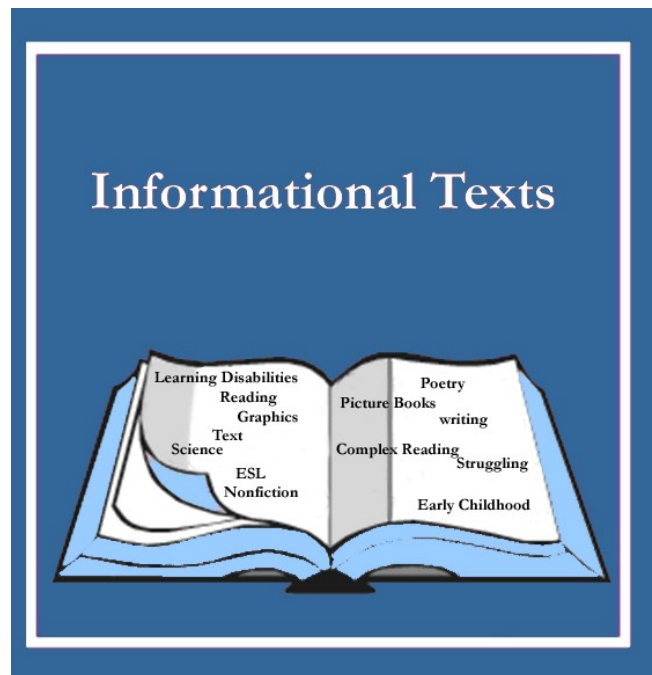


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TEACHERS ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Informational Texts

*Florida Reading Association
2016*



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Foreword

By Kathleen Fontaine, - FRA President

Bay County, Palm Bay Education Group, Inc.

The 2016 edition of *Teachers on the Cutting Edge* is respectfully offered to educators by the Florida Reading Association. Informational Texts is the hot topic presented in the 2016 edition. The relationship between reading and writing is important. Understanding the connection between reading and writing, when using with informational texts, is essential for students to be successful during their educational journey.

The reviewers have done a marvelous job of analyzing each article. Information provided within each review includes where and when the article was published, a short synopsis of the article, implications of the research, and practical classroom application of the research. Comments are embedded in the reviews to further define the findings of the research.

Teachers on the Cutting Edge, published by the Florida Reading Association, is a quality publication outlining current research. The Florida Reading Association is a group of professionals whose focus and energy center on literacy issues and other concerns. By working together to promote our common interest, we create a dynamic presence and a collective voice that can be heard throughout Florida. We invite all who share our common vision to join in our effort.

Enjoy *Teachers on the Cutting Edge*,
Kathleen Fontaine, Ed.D.



Editors' Foreword

Jennie Ricketts-Duncan - Barry University

Yvonne C. Campbell - Florida Memorial University

Recently revised curricular standards (Common Core) focus on preparing students for success in college, career, and life and emphasize increased critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills. With this shift in curricular standards, students are required to read and analyze content-rich informational texts (including history/social studies, sciences, technical studies, and the arts) that expand the background knowledge they need to become proficient readers and writers (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010). Informational texts include “biographies and autobiographies; books about history, social studies, science, and the arts; technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps; and digital sources on a range of topics” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010, p. 31).

The shift in curricular standards presents English Language Learners (ELLs) with even greater literacy challenges. ELLs have specific needs that differ from the needs of struggling readers who are native English speakers (Harper & de Jong, 2004). ELLs have to learn a new language (both social and academic) and simultaneously, learn to analyze content-rich informational texts – critical skills required in becoming successful readers and writers. This emphasis on teaching students how to read and analyze informational texts, starting from the elementary grades to high school, has challenged teachers to extensively use high-quality informational books as part of their daily instruction (Dreher, 2003; Pennington, Obenchain, & Brock, 2014). Teachers further infuse the use of digital texts to facilitate students’ application and extension of informational texts (Fisher & Frey, 2015; White, 2016).

Many students within elementary, middle, and high schools lack enthusiasm and interest as they advance from one grade level to another. Teachers must provide them with frequent opportunities and strategies to read informational books to help them develop vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, content-related knowledge, and critical thinking skills. The task of motivating them is of equal importance since many of these students are struggling readers who generally get easily bored and uninterested as they do not have the needed higher-order literacy skills to make connections or integrate information from multiple sources (Guthrie & Klauda, 2012).

In an effort to assist teachers with instructional strategies and resources to increase their practice, we have selected effective literacy innovations on informational texts for inclusion in this edition of *Teachers on the Cutting Edge*. These peer-reviewed articles represent synopses of research and evidence-based practices using informational texts within the K-12 classrooms. The goal of this edition is to provide teachers with practical and enriching ideas that will enhance instruction and motivate students to develop their reading and writing comprehension and appreciation for informational texts. We believe that students are naturally curious about their environment and integrating informational texts strategically, during daily instruction, will ignite their interest and provide opportunities to explore reading and writing in an authentic way.

Teachers on the Cutting Edge Committee is indebted to Dr. Idriss Abdoulaye (the dean of the School of Education at Florida Memorial University) for his invaluable contribution to and interest in the field of literacy education as illustrated, so eloquently, in his written invited foreword. Special thanks to the Florida Reading Association Board members who reviewed the articles and wrote the synopses.

Thank you!

Jennie Ricketts-Duncan, Ph.D.

Yvonne C. Campbell, Ph.D.

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Foreword
Idriss Abdoulaye - Dean, School of Education
Florida Memorial University

A primary aim of U.S. education is to develop citizens who can read, write, and critique informational discourse, who can locate and communicate the information they seek.

Duke, N. K. (2000)

Unlike narrative text, informational texts are written to communicate facts and ideas, and are typically the content of subject-matter textbooks in schools. Because it is written to communicate new information, it requires the reader to bring some prior knowledge to the text. According to Perfetti (2003), prior knowledge is a key factor that impacts learning through text. A large number of students lack the necessary prior knowledge required for comprehending informational texts thus making comprehension of informational texts a challenging task.

Another source of difficulty with informational texts is the specialized and technical vocabulary that may be absent from the reader's expressive, receptive, reading, or written vocabulary. The vocabulary in informational texts typically includes abstract concepts and symbols in math and science which the reader may, or may not be interested in, but is required to read. Teachers need to assess students' vocabulary knowledge and then help them gain the required word knowledge and strategies to become academically successful.

The text structure of informational texts also differs from the familiar structure of narrative texts. Authors of informational texts typically organize the information according to specific text structures that indicate the link between the main idea of the paragraph and the supporting details. The five most common text structures encountered in informational texts include cause and effect, comparison and contrast, definitions or descriptions, sequence or chronological order, and problem and solution (Armbruster, 2004). Regardless of a student's reading level, most students are unable to recognize the underlying text structures of informational texts (Vacca, 1998). In order for students to comprehend and remember important details contained in informational texts, they have to be able to identify the underlying text structure that shows the link between the main idea of the paragraph and the supporting details (Montelongo, Herter, Ansaldo, & Hatter, 2010).

English Language Learners face even greater challenges. They have to acquire both the forms and structure of a new language as well as the vocabulary contained in informational texts (Carlo, August, McLaughlin, Snow, Dressler, & Lippman 2004). Teachers need to build on students' prior knowledge and scaffold instruction in informational texts to help *all* students acquire the necessary word knowledge and underlying text structures contained in informational texts.

It is well known that teacher knowledge plays an important role in reading instruction. Effective teachers use explicit instruction to facilitate students' learning (Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). With explicit instruction, teachers show students what to do and how to do it. It is imperative for teachers to engage in continuous professional development. This issue of the *Cutting Edge* provides teachers with a variety of research based strategies that can enhance their professional development and help them make informational texts more comprehensible for the diverse students in our classrooms.

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Invited introduction by
Idriss Abdoulaye, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Education
Florida Memorial University

A Lesson Cycle for Teaching Expository Reading and Writing

Source:

Montelongo, J., Herter, R. J., Ansaldo, R., & Hatter, N. (2010). A lesson cycle for teaching expository reading and writing. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(8), 656-666.

Summary:

This article provides the results from an action research project on a four-part lesson cycle which was developed for use by middle school content area teachers and designed to promote activities that will benefit students' better reading of and writing about expository texts. The lesson cycle focuses on the following strategies: teaching vocabulary words, helping students understand and respond to text structures, providing a sentence completion (fill in the blank) activity, and teaching students to paraphrase/rewrite text. The lesson study project was carried out with 61 6th and 7th grade students during a five-week summer school session.

Through the results of pre- and post-test designed from commercially prepared workbooks on main idea, the action researchers found that the lesson cycle was effective in helping students identify main ideas in expository texts.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The article provides summaries and examples of the following:

- A four-part lesson cycle including activities to help teach reading and writing skills for expository text
- Strategies for teaching vocabulary
- Direct instruction strategies for teaching students to recognize cue words for text structures
- A modified sentence completion activity
- Strategies for teaching students to rewrite or paraphrase text to provide main idea and detail summaries

Comment:

The article provides a full lesson cycle, including examples, to assist teachers in working with students to develop their reading and writing skills when using expository texts with specific emphasis on recognizing cue words for text structure. It provides useful samples and is immediately applicable to content area classroom activities.

Diagrams, Timelines, and Tables – Oh, My! Fostering Graphical Literacy

Source:

Roberts, K. L., Norman, R. R., Duke, N. K., Morsink, P., Martin, N. M., & Knight, J. A. (2013). Diagrams, Timelines, and Tables – Oh, My! Fostering graphical literacy. *The Reading Teacher*, 67(1), 12-23.

Summary:

A recent investigation of over 250 science and social studies books suitable for second and third grade uncovered that 60% of the graphics in the texts provided information not included in the written text. Consequently, students who can decode and interpret graphical information have a marked benefit over students who do not. In other words, decoding alone may not be sufficient for students' comprehension when reading non-narrative texts that contain graphical information. In addition to decoding, in order for students to fully comprehend informational texts they need to be able to understand such graphical devices as: captions, cross-sectional diagrams, surface diagrams, flowcharts, graphs, insets, maps, tables, and timelines. With the rapid advancement of digital Web-based informational texts, there is little research that tells us how students comprehend using digital devices that incorporate graphic features. The lack of research does not mean we're not to move forward with instruction that facilitates children's graphical literacy development. On the contrary, we need to use the available research to create engaging lessons that incorporate graphic devices.

The article offers:

- information on what we need to teach students about graphics (with a particular emphasis on the graphics in informational texts)
- how we might teach students effectively
- some reflective thoughts on the increasing role of graphical devices in informational texts

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

Based on practical classroom experiences and available research, the authors make the following 12 recommendations to facilitate comprehension or composition of graphics in informational texts at the elementary level:

- Help students see that good readers read the graphics.
- Talk about graphics during read-alouds and shared reading.
- Emphasize the concepts of importance and extension in talking about texts.
- Have students read and write graphics for the same reasons people do outside of school.
- Use books with clear, persuasive, and engaging graphics.
- Discuss why the illustrator chose to use some specific graphical devices and not others.
- Have students plan the graphics in their own compositions.
- Provide students with opportunities to give and receive feedback on the graphics they create.
- Pair students to read texts that include rich graphical devices.
- Group students by their graphical development needs.
- Fill the classroom environment with graphics.
- Develop a school-wide plan for teaching students to comprehend and compose graphics in text.

Comments:

This article provides excellent instructional ideas for the K-6 classroom that will captivate the students' natural curiosity and help to develop their understanding of graphical devices in meaningful contexts that can transcend beyond the classroom.

Filling Toolboxes: Empowering Young Researchers with Informational Texts

Source:

Hall, A. (2016). Filling toolboxes: empowering young researchers with informational texts. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(4), 429-434.

Summary:

Anna Hall describes a tools approach that teachers can implement quickly and easily in early childhood classrooms to help students collect and understand information from informational texts. The approach focuses on children using text features as tools to gather and discuss the information. The author has used the approach herself with grades K – 3 and within a kindergarten case study. “The Tools approach consists of a four to five week process that includes three segments: (1) learning the tools, (2) conducting group research, and (3) conducting individual research. Once students have been introduced to the tools of informational text, the group research and individual research projects can be repeated at any point during the school year.” (p. 430). In order for students to learn the tools, the teacher should introduce and model one tool per week. During the group research process, students learn to take notes, participate in webbing, collaborate in the group writing, and publish a class book. After the group research, students are eager to do their own individual research. The author recommends that grades K-1 explore the same topic as with the group research. For example, the kindergarten class in the article chose the peacock to do their class group research. However, for individual students, the teacher encouraged the students to study a different animal. Final thoughts are shared, which include suggestions for stretching words in note-taking, avoiding rushing the drafting process, and celebrating by inviting parents, the principals, and other classes.

This article offers:

- A teaching approach that can teach young children to use text features in collecting information from informational texts.
- How this approach is used with kindergarten students to understand about their natural or social world.
- Explicit details of implementing the approach in three segments during a four to five week instructional process.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- This article reminds us that the use of informational texts can motivate young and emergent readers.
- Incorporating informational texts in grades K-3 can build vocabulary and content knowledge.
- The instructional approach described in this article can enable young students to gather information quickly and easily from informational texts.
- Introduces young children to the research process.

Comment:

Though this article focuses on a kindergarten example, first grade through third grade teachers are encouraged to implement the strategy. The author includes pictures of student samples which help to make this article a fun read.

Improving Access to Elementary School Social Studies Instruction: Strategies to Support Students with Learning Disabilities

Source:

Ciullo, S. (2015). Improving access to elementary social studies instruction: Strategies to support students with learning disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 48(2), 102-109.

Summary:

Social studies instruction, specifically in the upper elementary grades (3-5), receives the least amount of allocated instructional time when compared to the other content areas. Even less time is allocated for disabled students who are often removed from the classroom for remedial support. Ciullo provides possible options that assist in infusing social studies content into the classroom through a co-teaching inclusive setting. By doing so, the learning disabled students receive valuable instruction that better prepares them for the content of middle and high school. The option of focus allows teachers to align social studies text with the grade-level curricula one to two days per week focusing not only on the content, but also on the reading skills. By using a co-teach model, one teacher can focus on the content of the material in a teacher-led station, while the other teacher works on developing comprehension strategies in a separate teacher-led station. Ciullo specifically mentions using the *Get the GIST* strategy and the *Semantic Feature Analysis (SFA)* strategy as approaches that help build comprehension skills in the content areas. Ciullo also provides suggestions, such as, developing note-taking skills using a pre-made note-taking template for the general education teacher when supporting those students who receive indirect or consultative support from the special educator.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The resources provided by this article include:

- Online social studies text and lesson planning resources
- Explanation of the *SFA* strategy with a sample chart used for specific social studies content area
- Examples of how to make general education social studies available to students with learning disabilities
- *Get the Gist* strategy steps and samples
- Note-taking template
- Sample concept map

Comment:

The article provides specific examples of how to integrate social studies content within an ELA co-teaching classroom to better meet the needs of learning disabled students. The inclusion of graphic organizers and clear steps on how to assist students, make this article an excellent adaptation in the elementary and middle school classrooms.

Inquiry as ESL: Supporting Emerging Bilinguals' Content And Language Development

Source:

Busetti-Frevert, R. Moses, L., Pritchard, R. (2015). "Inquiry as ESL: Supporting Emerging Bilinguals' Content and Language Development. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(6), 435-447.

Summary:

The researcher and educators in this article integrated comprehension strategy instruction with research skills by integrating an inquiry-based instructional approach and learning environment to enhance learning for English learners. They provide evidence of student progress, a way to get started in your ESL classroom, explain the instructional strategies, and provide anchor lessons with teacher comments about each lesson. There are also many examples of students' work displayed. In addition, they describe the challenges they encountered along the way and how they addressed each one. Some of these challenges include technology, procedures, materials, language, and deepening the students' thinking. They also describe the power of inquiry-based approaches, especially for English learners.

The article offers:

- a way to begin an inquiry-based instructional approach in your classroom
- samples of anchor lessons
- how to empower English learners as researchers, readers, and writers

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- Students will perceive themselves as readers and writers.
- Provides students with authentic opportunities to respond to what they read.
- Students will build content knowledge, critical thinking, language development, and creativity.

Comment:

Although the article specifically focuses on second graders, this approach would be effective in any grade in elementary and secondary levels because it provides excellent teaching strategies on how the teacher and students can initiate success in developing vocabulary and language frames to support the students' overall literacy development.

Nurturing the Inquiring Mind Through the Nonfiction Read-Aloud

Source:

Stead, T. (2016). Nurturing the inquiring mind through the nonfiction read-aloud. *The Reading Teacher*, 67, (7), 488-495.

Summary:

Although nonfiction texts are less likely shared as read-alouds, compared to fictional texts, they have the potential to engage children, increase academic vocabulary, and prompt inquiry. However, teachers are often less likely to integrate nonfiction into their read-alouds for various reasons. In order to support teachers' use of nonfiction literature, the author describes a read-aloud instructional practice, she refers to as Reading and Analyzing Nonfiction (R.A.N.). The use of R.A.N. inspires stalk, inquiry and curiosity. R.A.N. incorporates the following five categories or techniques: (1) What I think I know, (2) Confirmed, (3) We don't think this anymore, (4) Exciting new information, and (5) Wonderings. The five categories, listed on chart paper, scaffold the processing of the text and often lead to further inquiry of the topic. Since students are more often recipients of questions rather than producers of questions, the author acknowledges that students may struggle to pose higher level questions and demonstrates how this can be overcome through teacher modeling and scaffolding of questions. Finally, the author recommends using R.A.N. thoughtfully and deliberately when appropriate, rather than using it at all times with all nonfiction read-alouds.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- Teachers should take time to locate well-crafted nonfiction literature about topics that students find compelling and then integrate them into the literacy block.
- Reading only part of longer informational texts or reading shorter pieces allows for more meaningful and focused classroom discussions.
- Nonfiction texts that present more than 10% of unfamiliar vocabulary in one sitting are not suitable for the read-aloud experience
- Students should not just mindlessly record a list of facts after they have listened to the read-aloud; they should be allowed to respond in a variety of ways.

Comment:

The author prompts teachers to reflect on their use of nonfiction text in the classroom. After reading the article, teachers are likely to ask themselves the following:

- How often do I share nonfiction texts?
- How do I engage students when reading nonfiction texts?
- How can I use nonfiction texts to facilitate inquiry and inspire curiosity among students?

Preparing English Language Learners for Complex Reading

Source:

Silva, J., Delleman, P., & Phesia, A. (2013). Preparing language learners for complex reading. *Educational Leadership*, 71(3), 54-56.

Summary:

This article addresses a way to prepare and engage middle school English language learners (ELLs) to meet the demands of complex reading by designing challenging instruction. The authors explained how they faced the challenges of finding beneficial resources and strategies along with texts to meet the needs of teaching ELL middle school students for complex reading. They found success by creating and implementing an explicit instructional framework of tasks to assist ELL students to recognize and grapple with the features of complex argumentative texts in English. First, they began by selecting the focused reading skills, the texts, and the topics. Then for each topic, they developed a set of five tasks and each task focused one of the reading skills. An example, one of the tasks involved distinguishing arguments and counterarguments. As they worked, students highlighted language in the texts that helped them complete the task. They then discussed questions that stimulated metacognitive thinking, such as these:

- What vocabulary or features of the text helped you with the task?
- What did you pay particular attention to?
- Which texts were the most difficult to understand? Why?
- Which were easiest to understand? Why?
- Can a task like this help you improve your reading skills? Why or why not?

“With teachers’ guidance, students developed and refined strategies that connected to each reading skill.” (p.54). The authors then assessed the effectiveness of the tasks by analyzing students’ interactions with the readings and recorded their comments. Students were surveyed after they completed all of the tasks for all of the topics to find out how much each task improved their reading skills. The authors plan to continue to design instruction in this way because the majority of students demonstrated that they had improved reading skills.

This article offers:

- A framework for designing explicit instruction to prepare ELL students for complex reading
- Examples of how ELLs were involved with tasks to analyze text.
- How the free resources at Pros and Cons of Controversial Issues (www.procon.org) was helpful to designing instruction?
- The tasks from the article can be accessed at www.cingles.edu.mx.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- This article reminds us that teachers can engage and motivate middle school ELLs to read challenging texts.
- Utilizing repeated readings of diverse topics can build interest in reading complex text.
- Nonpartisan articles presented in one-paragraph excerpts that support both the pro and con sides of provocative issues can assist ELLs to improve their reading skills.

Comment:

Though this article focuses on ELLs, upper elementary and secondary teachers assisting struggling students could replicate a similar explicit curriculum design process. The student examples described by the authors help to make this article fun and easy to read.

Reading to Learn from the Very Beginning: Information Books in Early Childhood

Source:

Duke, N. (2003). Reading to Learn From the Very Beginning: Information Books in Early Childhood. *National Association for the Education of Young Children*. Retrieved June, 2016, from <http://journal.naeyc.org/btj/200303/InformationBooks.pdf>.

Summary:

This article promotes the importance of using informational texts within the early childhood classroom to develop the students' informational literacy at an early stage. It defines informational text from the perspective of reading to learn and linking the theories that suggest that informational text is developmentally appropriate for young children. The author stated that because these children have shown an interest in their natural and social world it is appropriate to introduce them to informational texts that focus on the social and natural world. The article also highlights that students at the K-3 levels do not show any special preferences for narratives when compared with other texts; however, when teachers select texts that are of high interest to the students, the benefits are great.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- Read alouds and responses to read alouds are the best approaches to introduce informational text within the k-3 setting.
- Reading aloud informational text promotes vocabulary development and word knowledge.
- Repeated readings of informational text enable students to apply the key linguistic features when reading those same books.
- When choosing informational text for struggling readers, interest and preferences are to be considered.
- Developing a classroom library with a wide array of informational texts (e.g., nature magazines, non- story book texts) can appeal to a larger number of children with varied needs and interests.

Comment:

Providing young children with opportunities to interact with informational text provides a wealth of knowledge about the world they live in. Parent can assist by exposing their children to informational books at home to enable the understanding that literacy is a means of communication.

Reading Picture Books and Learning Science: Engaging Young Children With Informational Text

Source:

Mantzicopoulos, P. & Patrick, H. (2001). Reading Picture Books and Learning Science: Engaging Young Children With Informational Text. *Theory Into Practice*, 50: 269-276.

Summary:

The authors share research that tells how to engage young students using informational text. They give strong evidence to suggest that young children are not reading informational text as much as they should be and teachers and parents are exposing them to fiction picture books instead of non-fiction. They imply that teachers don't use informational text because they think that this text is more interesting to boys and/or too difficult for young children to comprehend. The authors, through their work with young children, found that young children are interested in science books, but girls are more attracted to biology content and boys are more attracted to physical science content. Mantzicopoulos and Patrick suggest pairing fiction and non-fiction texts so the science content is presented in a more engaging way. They also acknowledge that deep discussions, retelling, rereading and scaffolding when using information text with young children will enhance their vocabulary, comprehension and content knowledge.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

This article encourages reading non-fiction science text by:

- Immersing students in diverse text with teachers guiding them to understand the structures, features and purposes
- Including such texts into the curriculum to aide interest and engagement for both boys and girls

The article also gives guidance such as:

- Scaffolding and dialog being essential to supporting student comprehension of the nonfiction text
- Choosing developmentally appropriate texts that are scientifically accurate
- Retelling, rereading and discussing text to sharpen student thinking and understanding of the content
- Continued and appropriately supported exposure to science text to help motivate students' interest

Comment:

This article forces educators and teachers to stop and think about whether or not they have been exposing young students to enough informational text. Providing a print-rich environment for students must include a variety of age appropriate informational texts not just fictional texts.

Reading Science Text: Challenges for Students with Learning Disabilities and Considerations for Teachers

Source:

Mason, L. H., & Hedin, L. R. (2011). Reading science text: Challenges for students with learning disabilities and considerations for teachers. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 26(4), 214-222.

Summary:

Many students with learning disabilities (LD) receive instruction in general education science classrooms without an emphasis on the literacy skills necessary to successfully comprehend complex scientific texts. Such challenging texts may lead students to struggle with comprehension due to the specific text structure, the density of ideas and concepts, and the concentrated high level vocabulary contained in the texts.

In this article, the authors conducted a comprehensive review of several literature reviews and meta-analyses that provided direct evidence for effective science text reading comprehension instruction for students with LD. The following 3 major findings from the review include:

1. The positive effects of cognitive activities like main idea identification and summarization may be enhanced by instruction in self-regulatory processes.
2. The strength of effects may depend on duration of student training, grouping, and fidelity of implementation.
3. A large effect size was obtained for strategy instruction with explicit instruction contributing significantly to effect size.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The article provides:

- instructional techniques that may benefit the expository text comprehension of students with LD
- instructional elements for prior knowledge acquisition, text enhancement, strategy instruction, and multicomponent instruction
- an overview of instructional planning and implementation steps that describe how to incorporate explicit instruction and effective strategy acquisition when teaching students with LD how to read and learn from science texts

Comment:

The article provides a range of strategies and techniques for teachers to consider when teaching LD students to read science text.

Students' Close Reading of Science Texts: What's Now? What's Next?

Source:

Lapp, D., Grant, M., Moss, B., & Johnson, K. (2013). Students' Close Reading of Science Texts; What's Now? What's Next? *The Reading Teacher*, 67(2), 103-119.

Summary:

Weaving together standards and supporting close reading in science texts is a difficult task teachers are struggling with. This article offers the now and next steps for successful implementation of close reading in the elementary classroom. The authors feel it is important to balance narrative and informational text. State testing includes approximately 50% of each. Therefore, children need to have practice with both. By closely reading science texts, we are establishing a base of instructional knowledge to build on.

For elementary teachers to be successful utilizing close reading, their concerns need to be addressed. Many informational texts are a challenge for students, particularly English language learners and struggling readers. Teacher training in close reading is lacking. Educators need time to perfect this process. Through the ideas imbedded in this article, teachers have a step by step procedure to follow.

Close reading increases students' deep understanding of science text. By adding this procedure in their classroom, teachers and students experience increased comprehension of a once difficult piece of text.

Implications/Applications

- Close reading is a multi-step process:
 - First read for purpose and process with a probing question
 - Student discussion
 - Read again to answer text dependent questions
 - More conversation
 - Final read to validate understanding
- Close reading increases student comprehension

Comment:

This article focuses on the process of closely reading science texts in elementary classrooms. It gives a step by step procedure for success. It can be adapted to be used by both middle and high school science teachers.

Systems for teaching complex texts: A proof-of-concept investigation

Source:

Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2016). Systems for teaching complex texts: A proof-of-concept investigation. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(4), 403–412 DOI:10.1002/trtr.1409.

Summary:

This article discusses a yearlong study conducted by Fisher and Frey who have published many scholarly articles in the area of text complexity. Based on their own research, as well as the research of others, Fisher and Frey seek to address students' success (as in college and career ready) in meeting text complexity expectations (based on the language of the Standards). They state that data indicate "text complexity in grades 3–6 has been slowly rising for decades," however; the research also "expresses concerns for students in the lowest quartile." In fact, research suggests that **all** students would benefit from a "shift" in current daily classroom instructional practice (p. 403). To address this concern, the authors identified six instructional practices for teaching complex text and proposed that the six practices be taught, not in isolated scenarios, but "...in conjunction..." (p. 411) that is, "*in combination*" (p. 406) during the daily literacy/reading block. The study itself does not rely on typical pre and post data findings, but was implemented as a "proof-of concept investigation" (p. 405), which focused on the approach. The six aspects and concepts implemented within one literacy/reading block are:

1. Learning intentions
2. Teacher modeling
3. Close reading
4. Scaffolded reading
5. Text-based collaborative conversations, and
6. Wide reading.

Sixteen third to sixth grade teachers participated in this study. They attended a weeklong summer professional development program prior to beginning school and held an extra single day of planning to redesign their literacy/reading blocks. During the school year, they were observed twice a month during literacy lessons from October to May. The teachers were interviewed monthly and invited to participate in monthly focus group meetings as well. While a few commented that "we do this already" (p. 406), they agreed that planning together was very helpful. By the end of the study, all sixteen teachers, "(100%), discussed positive performance trends on various district benchmark assessments" (p. 410). The researchers concluded: "Meeting higher reading expectations will likely require significant curricular and instructional shifts" (p. 404).

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The article provides:

- Summaries and examples the six concept aspects and practices
- Discussion of implementation of each of the six
- Ongoing commentary from the teachers about their implementation, challenges and successes
- A list of research supporting teaching toward text complexity, specific to each of the six.

Comment:

The article provides thoughtful commentary and adds to the already extensive research and writing Fisher and Frey have provided on teaching towards text complexity. It is a must read

Teaching about and with informational texts: What does the research teach us?

Source:

Maloch, B., & Bomer, R. (2013). Teaching about and with informational texts: What does the research teach us? *Language Arts*, 90(6), 441-450.

Summary:

Although research on teaching about and with informational texts is limited, literacy acquisition and instruction with informational texts needs to proceed with known studies on proven practices. With regards to explicit instruction with informational texts, the following two key understandings need to be taken into consideration when working with students (1) explicit instruction is only effective for students who engage in real reading and writing and (2) needs to be situated within authentic opportunities to engage with informational texts. Such opportunities should replicate what students may face in their world outside of school. In order for explicit instruction to optimally benefit young readers and writers, it should be delivered in the contexts of immersion, demonstrations, and support in ways that may transfer to new contexts and advance their ongoing investigation and learning. In addition, we also need to keep in mind that comprehension is genre specific. In other words, the strategic activities (in-the-head processing) that learners use to comprehend informational texts is dependent on the types of texts that students are exposed to in school.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

This article provides the following recommendations and guidance for teaching with informational texts:

- Make informational texts available and accessible
- Create authentic opportunities for engagement
- Engage students through interactive read-alouds and discussion
- Be explicit when necessary

Comment:

A key highlight of this article is the role of student engagement with informational texts. Reading it critically brings to mind Brian Cambourne's work on conditions of learning and four factors for engagement to take place: (a) learners need to feel safe to make mistakes; (b) learners understand that when mistakes are made someone will be around to help; (c) learners have a clear understanding of what's in it for them; and (d) demonstrations are provided by someone the learner respects and admires.

Teaching Students to Compose Informational Poetic Riddles to Further Scientific Understanding

Source:

Frye, E., Bradbury, L., & Cross, L. (2016). Teaching students to compose informational poetic riddles to further scientific understanding. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(4), 435-445.

Summary:

Elementary schools focus mainly on reading and writing narrative texts and not so much on informational texts. Consequently, students experience difficulty with reading and writing informational texts in elementary school. To help bridge the informational text “gap” the authors outline an instructional method to integrate informational writing with scientific content knowledge by teaching students to write informational poetic riddles such as “*What am I?*” riddles. Integrating curriculum and methods, to differentiate instruction, provide students with a foundation for engaging informational texts learning experiences. Frye, Bradbury and Cross (2016) provide an instructional platform for students to deepen their understanding of content area information by composing poetic riddles. Students immerse themselves in reading, analyzing, and annotating mentor texts to concentrate on text features and text structures.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The article provides a step by step approach that:

- is embedded within a gradual release of responsibility model
- helps students successfully encode scientific information in a poetic riddle format
- extends scientific content through Internet workshops

Comment:

The article emphasizes the integration of curriculum and provides an instructional platform that includes a gradual release of responsibility model to help students become accomplished readers and writers.

Three Important Words: Students Choose Vocabulary to Build Comprehension of Informational Text

Source:

Hoch, M., Bernhardt, R., Murphy-Schiller, M., & Fisher, P. J. (2013). Three Important Words: Students Choose Vocabulary to Build Comprehension of Informational Text. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 41(3), 3-12.

Summary:

Comprehension of informational text is particularly challenging for struggling readers. In this article, the authors describe how they used the *Three Important Words* strategy to scaffold the reading and writing experiences of struggling readers during a summer reading program that consisted of 20 one-on-one daily tutoring sessions. Through the use of think-alouds, the teachers used informational text and modeled the strategy. The strategy incorporates finding the main idea, annotation, and summarizing. Scaffolding is gradually withdrawn as students become more efficient in using the strategy.

The model includes the following four phases to facilitate students' comprehension skills and to build stamina through:

- focused strategy lessons that establish a purpose for learning and model the way you want students to work
- guided instruction using the strategy with small groups,
- collaborative learning that uses discussion of the strategy and negotiation, and
- independent practice using the strategy

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- The strategy can be adapted to meet the needs of individual learners in the classroom.
- It is essential that students are provided with opportunities to give oral explanations through thinking and talking aloud.

Comment: The instructional procedure used with this strategy is based on the gradual release of responsibility model that allows students to take responsibility for their own learning. The strategy also allows opportunity for students to engage in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Unlocking Text Features for Determining Importance in Expository Text: A Strategy for Struggling Readers

Source:

Bluestein, N. A. (2010). Unlocking text features for determining importance in expository text: A strategy for struggling readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(7), 597-600.
doi:10.1598/RT.63.7.7.

Summary:

Identifying important information in a text can be a challenge for many readers, and can prove especially difficult for struggling readers. This article explores how teachers can scaffold instruction using various types of informational texts and accompanying text features to “create a bridge to expository text comprehension” (p. 597). Explicit instruction in the purpose and use of text features, is used to help students better navigate informational text, and teachers further help students by showing how those text features are helpful in identifying the most important information. Bluestein (2010) recommends that teachers start with explicit instruction in biographical texts, the rationale being that these texts are typically narrative and sequential, and therefore familiar and predictable for students. A table of contents, an index, timelines, and images with captions are text features typically found in biographical texts that can highlight areas of importance in a person’s life. Taking into consideration setting and the actions and beliefs of the individual being studied in connection with the aforementioned text features can help students identify the most important information. Once students have had success in narrative biographical texts, they use their understanding of text features to identify important information in journalistic texts (e.g., *Time for Kids*). In this genre, teachers provide additional explicit instruction on analyzing graphic features, noticing features that pop out at the reader, and embedded text features such as text boxes and subheadings. Finally, students move on to informational texts and textbooks, using their understanding of previously learned text features and recognition of newly encountered text features to accurately identify important information, ultimately pulling together important points throughout the text to create a cohesive summary.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- Struggling students need explicit instruction in the roles of text features and how those text features work together to highlight important information
- Scaffolding instruction beginning with narrative nonfiction (considerate) text gives students the understanding and experience needed to successfully identify important information in increasingly less-considerate texts.

Comment:

The article gives a broad and basic outline as to how teachers can scaffold instruction through various types of text using accompanying text features, but specific strategies are not discussed.

What the Student Can Do When the Reading Gets Rough

Source:

Cummins, S. (2013). "What the Student Can Do When the Reading Gets Rough." *Educational Leadership*, 71(3), 69-72.

Summary:

In her blog, *What the Student Can Do When the Reading Gets Rough*, Sunday Cummins gives teachers the tools they need to get students reading informational text more effectively. She advocates that throwing Common Core Standards at striving readers is not the best method without first teaching self-monitoring strategies such as coding and annotating texts. With expert modeling and ongoing practice sessions, teachers can change the mindset of even the most reluctant reader. Self-monitoring will be a tool that students can keep in their toolkits for their entire educational careers. A little time spent now will result in better outcomes tomorrow.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

Written in an accessible style without educational jargon, the article offers:

- Reproducible coding (meta-cognitive marking) strategies
- Modeling tips
- Examples of texts and their annotations
- Strategies for approaching reluctant readers

Comment:

This article will be extremely helpful for teachers who are faced with trying to increase informational text comprehension with students reading below level. Strategies, such as, modeling, giving advice, and providing examples of text give teachers a great starting point for teaching self-monitoring strategies.

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