SESSION 3: TEACHING STUDENTS TO COMPREHEND EXPOSITORY TEXT

Introduction | Expository Text | Graphic Organizers | Multi-Genre Text | Look Ahead

Introduction

Overview

In Session 2, you learned about strategies good readers use to comprehend text and direct instruction in text comprehension. In this session, you will explore two specific genres of text, expository text and multi-genre text. In addition, you will learn some specific techniques for helping students comprehend these two genres.

Objectives

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

- Analyze and compare text layout, language use, and comprehension challenges in narrative and expository text by completing a graphic organizer.
- Synthesize your learning about graphic organizers by designing one, trying it out with students, and discussing graphic organizers with fellow learners.
- Evaluate the utility of using expository text with students in grades 1-3 through online discussion and journal writing.

If you haven't done so already, download and print the Assignment Checklist to keep track of your assignments for this course.
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Features of Expository Text

Comparing Narrative and Expository Text Assignment

1. Download and open the Text Analysis Graphic Organizer [Word | RTF] in your word processor. You will use your word processor to complete the document electronically.
2. Select one expository text and one narrative text from a first, second, or third grade classroom. Gather books from your classroom or select two from the Narrative and Expository Booklist provided and check them out of your local or school library.
3. Read both texts carefully.
4. Analyze the layout of the texts. Consider such factors as amount of text per page, number of pictures per page, length of paragraphs, and presence of call-out boxes and captions. Write information about the text layout in each text in the first column.
5. Read the text—or a few pages of the text—again. This time, pay close attention to word choice—the kinds of words and sentence structures that are used in the text. Note any words, phrases, or sentences that you think are unique to narrative or expository text. Be sure to pay attention to the kinds of "non-content" words or phrases that are used in each text type (e.g., "in addition", "therefore", etc.). Write information about word choice for each text in the second column of the graphic organizer.
6. Finally, think about what might make this book particularly challenging to readers. List some challenges you think the average student would encounter in reading or listening to these texts read aloud and why in the final column of the graphic organizer. Think about information you have already recorded in the other columns when identifying potential comprehension challenges. For instance, the layout of a given text or sentence length may present a challenge to students.
7. Don't forget to refer to the assessment rubric for this assignment.
8. Submit the completed graphic organizer as an attachment to your facilitator by the end of this session.

Using Expository Text

Now that you have had the opportunity to consider the differences between narrative and expository text and have identified some of the unique challenges expository text poses to students, read "Nonfiction Trade Book Use in Primary Grades." This article discusses the relatively recent push to include nonfiction books in elementary school classrooms. By interviewing teachers and students at one school, the authors discover what students think about nonfiction books and uncover the challenges teachers face in using expository text in the early grades. As you read, think about the students' and teachers' opinions. You may wish to refer to these as you contribute to the discussion for this session.
Utility of Expository Text

Imagine the following scenario:

A second grade teacher across the hall is a veteran teacher. Recently, you attended a workshop on your state’s standards for reading comprehension. The importance of using expository text with students was stressed. Your colleague argued that he has been using only narrative text for years with students, and he feels that this approach is successful. He feels that expository text is best for older students and too hard for younger students.

Discuss the following question related to the scenario you just read:

What arguments can you use to convince your colleague of the utility of expository text with students in grades 1-3?

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. Refer to the discussion rubric to review the expectations for participating in online discussions in this course.
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Designing and Using Graphic Organizers

In this section, you will learn about graphic organizers—visual tools that help children understand expository text. Many teachers have already seen or already used a graphic organizer in their instruction of expository text comprehension, but not all teachers know how to use graphic organizers in a way that builds students' comprehension.

Graphic Organizers

Review the reading from last session titled "Our Students Are Ready for This: Comprehension Instruction in the Elementary School." This time, think about the use of graphic organizers for supporting students' comprehension.

Design a Graphic Organizer Assignment

In the article "Our Students Are Ready for This: Comprehension Instruction in the Elementary School" you read about many different graphic organizers that can help students comprehend expository text. For this assignment, you will design a graphic organizer to be used in conjunction with an expository text that students will read or, depending on the reading level of the students with whom you work, one that you will read aloud to students.

1. Choose an expository text appropriate to the student or students with whom you will be working. Depending on the reading levels of your students, this can be a text that students will read themselves or one that you will read aloud to them. Please use our booklist if you need some suggestions for texts.

2. Design a graphic organizer that will help students understand the text. You may use the graphic organizer shown in the article "Our Students Are Ready for This: Comprehension Instruction in the Elementary School" or one from other resources you may have. Alternately, you might peruse the following Web sites for some inspiration:
   - NcREL
   - TeacherVision

3. If you are currently working in a classroom, use the reading and the graphic organizer with a small group of children. If you are not working in a classroom, you can try this activity with a child that you know. Afterwards, take some notes on what happened as you implemented the graphic organizer. If you like, you may record your notes in the notes section of your online journal.

4. If you have extra time, use the reading and graphic organizer with different groups of children and compare their different responses.

5. In the discussion forum, attach your graphic organizer and craft a post with the following information:
   - Title and author of the expository text
   - Grade level of the students
   - A brief summary of the experience using the text and graphic organizer
with students.

6. Critique at least two other learners' graphic organizers and discuss successes as well as areas that could be improved.
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Strategies for Comprehending Multi-Genre Text

Multi-genre text is text that includes one or more genres related to the same topic.

Comprehension of Multi-Genre Text

Read "Developing Strategic Use of Combined-Text Trade Books." This article describes texts that include both narrative and expository text and outlines ways in which these texts can be used effectively in the classroom. As you read, consider ways in which you might use multi-genre text in your classroom.

In your online journal, reflect on what you have learned about multi-genre texts, the potential comprehension challenges they present, and strategies for using them effectively in your classroom instruction. Use any prior experiences you have had with this genre while writing your reflection. Use the following questions to guide your writing:

- What are the benefits and potential limitations of multi-genre texts?
- What strategies can teachers use to help students construct meaning using this genre?

Return to your online journal. Be sure that all of your responses are complete and free of grammatical and structural errors. Your facilitator will be assessing your journal reflections at the end of this session.

Additional Resources (not required)
If you would like to find out more information about expository and practical ideas for using expository text in the early grades, check out the following resources at your local library:


If you are interested in learning more about the design and use of graphic organizers, try
the following resources:


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**References**


All IRA articles are used with permission from the International Reading Association.
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Introduction | Expository Text | Graphic Organizers | Multi-Genre Text | Look Ahead

Look Ahead

Review the final project and final project rubric once again and consider if you can use any of the concepts in this session for this project. Make notes to guide you. We recommend that you begin the final project before Session 6.

In Session 4, you will learn a number of collaborative approaches for helping students improve their reading comprehension, including book clubs.

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