SESSION 1: RATIONALE FOR TEACHING READING IN THE CONTENT AREAS

Introduction | Teaching Reading In The Content Areas | Five Basic Premises | Look Ahead

Introduction

Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn.

—Joseph Addison

Overview

When students lack the skills necessary to comprehend what they are reading, they struggle with text. Over time, this struggle can lead to their lack of enthusiasm when it comes to reading. Reading in the content areas involves the use of prior knowledge to connect what students know to new information being presented. It is also requires an understanding that authors use patterns to organize their writing. When students are able to recognize these patterns, they can more readily comprehend the text, especially if they use a note taking strategy and a graphic organizer to help them frame their thinking. In this session you will read more about the importance of teaching reading in the content areas, schema theory and use the K-W-L strategy.

Objectives

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

- Define your professional goals and expectations for this course.
- Explain your prior knowledge of teaching reading in the content areas.
- Discuss how your thinking about teaching reading in the content areas has changed as a result of reading "Rationale for Teaching Reading in the Content Areas."
- Identify some challenges of teaching reading in the content areas and some possible solutions.
- Use a KWL chart to identify five premises that are basic to the teaching of content area reading skills.
- Explain how you would use the KWL chart with students to summarize their learning.

Throughout the course, you will be asked to record your thinking, reflections, and responses to other learners’ ideas in your online journal. You will use these reflections to complete assignments. You will also need to respond to other learners’ discussion board comments as you move through the course.

To keep track of your assignments for this session, print the Assignment Checklist.

Getting Started

Expectations

Reflect on your professional goals and expectations for this course and record these in your online journal. You may wish to use the following questions to guide your writing:
What are your expectations for this course?
What knowledge and skills do you hope to learn?
How will this professional development experience shape your future instruction?

Prior Knowledge

Think about a time when you assigned a text that your students found difficult to read, and the strategies that were employed by you and your students to understand it. Record your thoughts in your online journal. You may wish to use the following questions to guide your writing:

What strategies did your students use to focus on and understand that difficult reading passage?

Brainstorm a list of strategies that you know strategic readers use to help them focus on and complete their reading.

Get to Know Each Other

Take a moment to introduce yourself to your fellow learners in the discussion board. Go to the discussion board and click on the Virtual Café forum. When you introduce yourself, include the following information:

- Your name.
- What grades and classes you teach (or plan to teach).
- Why you are taking this course.
- How could you share the strategies that strategic readers use with your struggling readers.

As you complete the rest of the readings and assignments for this session, you should go to the discussion forum at least two or three times to continue the discussion. Refer to the discussion forum rubric for how this assignment will be assessed.
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The Importance of Teaching Reading In The Content Areas

Knowing how to select and use strategies for content area reading helps students deepen their understanding of what they are studying. Select which declarative and procedural knowledge you will teach based on your district's standards and benchmarks.

To get an idea of standards and benchmarks typically found in content areas, read "A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education." As you read, think about how these standards compare to your own district's standards and benchmarks.

Reading to Learn

For an in-depth look at why teaching reading in the content areas is an essential component of effective instruction, read "Rationale for Teaching Reading in the Content Areas." As you read, think about the importance you give to "reading to learn content" in your classroom instruction.

Engage in an online discussion by responding to the following questions:

How has your thinking about teaching reading in the content areas and its importance to strategic teaching and learning changed as a result of reading "Rationale for Teaching Reading in the Content Areas"?

What are some challenges to teaching reading in the content areas and how may they be overcome? Remember to refer to the readings in the course to support your comments.

As you complete the rest of the readings and assignments for this session, you should go to the discussion forum at least two or three times to continue the discussion. Refer to the discussion forum rubric to review the expectations for participating in online discussions in the course.
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Five Premises Basic To The Teaching Of Content Area Reading Skills

We know that the meaning of text is not contained in the words on the page. The reader must construct meaning by making logical, sensible connections between the new information read and what he or she already knows about that topic. Researchers believe this information is stored in knowledge frameworks called schemata.

Schema Theory Activity

This activity illustrates that deriving meaning is not simply a matter of reading the words on a page. In order to comprehend, the reader selects a schema that seems appropriate and connects it to the new information, filling in any gaps so that the text makes sense. Because no two students bring the same background and experience to class, no two students will comprehend a text passage in the same way. The following interactive activity is an introduction to the schema theory.

1. Read the paragraph and fill in the missing words.

Schema Theory

In the 1860's, A ______________ , issued the Emancipation __________. This order freed millions of s______________, The C_______________ had the authority to enforce this order. Emancipation alone did not give the former s_________ a new life. Decades of economic hardship and unequal rights continued. A_______________ plan was supported by many R_______________.

2. Now check your answers.

Differentiated Instruction

Read "An Exploratory Study of Schema-Based Word-Problem-Solving Instruction for Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities: An Emphasis on Conceptual and Procedural Understanding," which discusses the results of a study that analyzed students who were exposed to based word problem-solving instruction in their special education mathematics class.

K-W-L

For the next assignment in this part of the course, you will use another reading strategy called K-W-L:
Create a K-W-L Chart Assignment

In this assignment, you will use the K-W-L strategy to support your own reading of a passage about the five premises basic to the teaching of content area reading skills: schema theory, prior knowledge, metacognition, the reading/writing relationship, and student collaboration. You may wish to review the KWL chart rubric for this assignment before you begin.

1. Complete the first two columns of the K-W-L chart before reading "Five Premises to the Teaching of Content Area Reading Skill." You should have at least one entry for each premise in each column (10 entries in all.)
2. Read "Five Premises to the Teaching of Content Area Reading Skill." (PDF) As you read, think about what you already know about these topics and what information is new to you.
3. Complete the third column in the K-W-L chart. Compare what you know after you have read with the prior knowledge you listed in the "K" column. You should have at least one entry for each premise.
4. Submit your completed K-W-L chart to the facilitator.
5. In your online journal, answer the following question:

   How would you have students summarize their learning after they have completed a K-W-L chart?

Additional Resources (not required)

Visit the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory site to take an additional look at the K-W-L strategy.

Citation

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.
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Look Ahead

Keep in mind that to complete this course you will need to complete a final project in Session 6. In each session of this course, you will be introduced to many different strategies that will enable students to read multiple types of content-area texts. For your final project, you will: plan how you might implement each strategy, practice implementing one strategy with a group of students, and reflect on the experience. You might want to keep ideas for your final project in the Notes area of your online journal. You will work on the final project during Sessions 3-6.

In Session 2 of this course, you will delve into the three interactive elements of reading: the reader, the climate, and the text. You will also explore the importance of strategic processing, and strategic teaching.

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