

Curriculum-based language intervention: Targeting expository text

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A project based intervention program

- *developed to teach strategies to aid in the comprehension and expression of expository text*
- *developed for students in Grades 3-12*

Background

• *historically, most reading in the early grades was done using the narrative mode and, for the most part, this continues (Westby, 2012)*

• *recently, the reading of expository text has been introduced in K-3 classrooms (Williams, 2005).*

• *by third grade and certainly by fourth (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Best, Floyd, & McNamara, 2008) students are expected to shift to reading exposition*

• *by junior high (middle school), expository text is used for all content areas with the exception of language arts/literature courses (Westby, 2012).*

The intervention we will be sharing has been designed to enhance literacy using expository text.

Students will learn:

- *strategies designed to enhance comprehension and expression of exposition.*
- *how to use these strategies in their curriculum within a project-based intervention*

Narrative versus expository text

(Westby, 2012; Pilonieta, 2011; Johnson & Curran, 2011).

Purpose	Narrative	Entertain
	Expository	Inform
Structure	Narrative	Predictable structure referred to as a story grammar
	Expository	Multiple text structures within the same paragraph and/or body of work
Language	Narrative	Past tense forms and "everyday" language
	Expository	Present tense form and more technical language

Narrative versus expository text (cont.)

Content	Narrative	Generally familiar
	Expository	Frequently unfamiliar
Processing	Narrative	Typically, top-down processing
	Expository	Bottom-up processing

Targeted Population

- Students in grades 3 through 12
- Students with diagnosed language impairments or learning disabilities, are labeled at-risk, and/or second language learners

Delivery models

The intervention may be used:

- with individuals
- with small groups

Essential features

The features chosen are grounded in evidence-based practice (EBP).

Specific research will not be shared today but instead sources will be shared; you may read these should you choose to do so. Please consult the bibliography.

Expository Text Challenges

Expository texts can be particularly challenging for students with language difficulties due to:

- **Lexical density** – high proportion of nouns, verbs & adjectives (Fang, 2008)
- **Frequent use of abstract, technical terminology** that is difficult to visualize (Westby, Culatta, Lawrence & Hall-Kenyon, 2010)
- **Frequent use of complex syntactic structures** such as embedding and subordination (Scott & Balthazar, 2010)
- **Deficits in vocabulary knowledge and grammatical development** (Catts, Fey, Zhang & Tomblin, 1999; Share & Leikin, 2004)
- **Unfamiliarity with passage content** (Kamhi, 2012)

Student goals

Student goals will vary.

- exposition may be the vehicle used for intervention
- exposition may be the goal of intervention
- exposition may be used to target fluency, decoding and/or speech-sound disorders

Essential Features (cont.)

- **The program is adaptable to individual or group intervention.** (EBP: Law, Garrett, & Nye, 2003)
- **The program uses student input.** (EBP: Kamhi, 2000; McLeod & Bleile, 2004; McReynolds, 1987; Weiss, 2004)
- **The program involves use of curriculum based intervention.**

Rationale

- *According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), there is increased pressure on educators to prepare students for secondary education (ASHA, 2010, p. 5). In particular, emphasis is placed on "...literacy proficiency and achievement in the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)."*

Essential features (cont.)

The program promotes use of strategy based instruction.

- **activating background knowledge** (EBP: Dole, Brown, & Trathern, 1996; Idol-Maestas, 1985; Nolan, 1991; Best, Floyd, & McNamara, 2008.)

- **b. Expository text features**, used to aid the reader in comprehending content, should be introduced (EBP: Proly, Rivers, & Schwartz, 2009; Dickson, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1998; Beck, McKeown & Worthy, 1995.)

Essential features (cont.)

- **The program targets use of metacognition.**
Metacognition involves two parts (Westby, 2005):
 - self-appraisal and reflection
 - self-management and regulation
 (EBP: Allington, Guice, Michelson, Baker, & Li, 1996; Williams, 2005.)

Essential features (cont.)

- **identifying of text structures**
 - a. **Expository text types**, used for sharing expository content, should be introduced.
 - **Key words** that vary with the use of different text types should be introduced. Key words have been termed "signal words," (Akhondi, Malayeri, & Samad, 2011).
 - **A graphic organizer**, used to aid in visualizing text structures and to record information, should be shared.

Essential features (cont.)

- **The program promotes use of strategy based instruction.**
 - **paraphrasing and summarizing**
 - a. Paraphrasing requires students to relay information using different words while summarizing requires them to paraphrase information in a condensed format.
 - b. Difficulty with paraphrasing and summarization stems from an inability to determine main ideas (Williams, 1993). Therefore, it is important that students have success determining main ideas prior to working on paraphrasing and summarization (Ehren, 2005).

(EBP: Westby, Culatta, Lawrence, & Hall-Kenyon, 2010; Gillam, Fargo, & Robertson, 2009.)

Implementation of intervention components

This section contains the intervention components that should be addressed prior to working specifically on a project.

These *preparatory activities* are critical to all projects.

Preparatory Activities

- **Students will identify personal literacy strengths and challenges with the aid of the instructor.**

 If students have difficulty writing, it is suggested that the following aids be considered:

- Stickwriting (Ukrainetz, 1998)
- Dictating
- Cooperative learning

Preparatory Activities (cont.)

- **Students will assume responsibility for intervention**

Appendix 2
MY CONTRACT

I, _____, want to learn strategies that will help me understand information read in school and to share information learned in school.

_____, my instructor, will help me understand what I need to do, but I will do the work.

_____	_____
Student	Date
_____	_____
Instructor	Date

Preparatory Activities (cont.)

- **Students will learn about the components and steps associated with project based intervention.**

Talk about the following:

- How teachers/authors share information
- Definition/examples of expository text
- Importance/use of learning strategies
- Self-evaluation

Preparatory Activities (cont.)

- **Students will record any strategies they might use while reading informative text.**

Preparatory Activities (cont.)

• Students will learn specific strategies designed to enhance comprehension and expression of exposition.

The strategies include:

- those involving remembering information about a subject that was learned earlier,
- those looking at the way the author is sharing that information, and
- those involving the learning of how to paraphrase, and, as appropriate, summarize information.

Strategies (cont.)

Strategy 2: Analyze text structures

a. Expository Text Types

Organizational structure used by the author to share information

Choose two to four text types to target for the first project – one at a time. Review these and add one or two more before subsequent projects are introduced.

Target each text type for two to three sessions before introducing the next one.

Resources for obtaining graphic organizers

- Computer programs
- Books with templates and instructions
- Programs specially designed to help educators use them
- Printable graphic organizers available on websites
<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>
<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=2983>
<http://www.realclassroomideas.com/65.html>

Strategies

Strategy 1: Activate background knowledge

- Demonstrate the “think-aloud” strategy.
- Show the students the title of a text chapter. Ask them to brainstorm what they think about when they read it. Write this information on the board.
- Create a semantic map with information.
- Ask the students questions to help them think about what else they know about a topic and also to make predictions about content.

Text types include

(Calfee & Patrick, 1995; Weaver & Kintsch, 1991; modified by Johnson and Curran, 2011).

Descriptive Structures

List
Web
Compare-Contrast

Sequential Structures

Schedule
Procedure
Cause-Effect
Problem-Solution

- Introduce the associated key words
- Introduce the associated graphic organizer

Expository text features (cont.)

b. Text features – structural cues used by the author of the text to share information

- inside text
 - Subheadings, graphs, maps, charts, italicized words, and figures
- outside text
 - Indexes, glossaries, and tables of contents

Strategies (cont.)

Strategy 3: Paraphrase and summarize

(To be used for students in grades 6-12 as appropriate.)

Paraphrasing (cont.)

Demonstrate two paraphrasing strategies

- substituting synonyms and definitions for certain words (semantic strategy)
- breaking-up long sentences into two shorter sentences or combining several short sentences into a longer one (syntactic strategy)

Help students paraphrase individual sentences and short paragraphs they encounter within texts.

Preparatory activities (cont.)

Students will employ meta-cognition to meet task demands and assess their progress as learners.

Encourage students to ask themselves questions to help regulate their attention, monitor comprehension and assess their strategy use while reading/producing expository texts.

Paraphrasing

Explain that **paraphrasing** is telling about what they just read in their own words.

Explain that paraphrasing

- can help them remember text content and
- will show their teachers that they understand what they just read.

Summarizing

Explain that when paraphrasing longer text passages, students have to summarize.

Summarization requires them to identify the most important content in a passage, condense and paraphrase it.

- Read a sample expository passage aloud to your students, then look back and reread it and talk about how you decide what ideas are most important.
- Use text passages to help students practice underlining and/or generating main idea statements.
- Then ask students to paraphrase the main idea in their own words.

Preparatory activities (cont.)

Examples include:

- What is my goal for reading this text passage?
- What strategies should I use to be sure I understand it?
- What strategies can I use if I don't understand something?
- Do I understand the main points?
- How does this information fit into my project?

Students will be introduced to the upcoming project.

Project Learning

A student's interest in a topic often has a more facilitating effect on comprehension and motivation than text readability or a reader's reading level (Donovan, Smolkin, & Lomax, 2000).

One Example: Develop a documentary

- Define a documentary
- Explain that documentaries are often seen when information is shared visually.
- Students will identify and analyze three topics that have been studied that could be developed into a documentary and then choose one they would like to develop

Students will

...identify three topics

...review information they know about each and complete the W on a modified K-W organizer (Ogle, 1986)

Students will

...choose which of the topics they would like to develop

...analyze the chosen topic more completely using the K-W organizer

K = What I know

W = What I want to know

- **Students will formulate goals for the documentary.**

Example goals for a documentary about planets

The audience will be provided with a definition of a planet.

The audience will learn the characteristics of earth, the only planet known to support life.

The audience will understand ways that people have damaged the earth.

The audience will learn how those actions affect plants and animals.

The audience will understand what we can do to save the planet.

The audience will learn what world leaders are doing to help save the planet.

Example goals for a documentary about coaching athletics.

The audience will be provided with definitions of athletics and coaching.

The audience will learn that there are different kinds of athletic coaches.

The audience will learn about the responsibilities of coaches.

The audience will learn reasons why some coaches are considered to be special.

The audience will listen to students ask two coaches about their responsibilities.

The audience will learn what two coaches try to teach their players.

The audience will listen to advice two coaches share with students interested in becoming coaches.

Students will

...develop goals for the documentary

Students will

...talk about what is already known about the topic and what should be researched further.

- **Students will conduct their research for the documentary.**

Students will

...reread goals that do not yet have a check-mark beside them and have the students choose (or be assigned) a goal or two to research.

Students will

...talk about the need to use the strategies learned earlier to find and comprehend the information that is to be found.

For example:

- talk about the specific descriptive and sequential text structures
- talk about the key words that might have been used by authors to share the information.
- review the expository text features that might be used by authors to share the information.

Important

At this point, it is important that you find the appropriate graphic organizers needed by each student to record what will be learned in the area chosen (assigned) and share these.

Further information

The completed graphic organizers will contain the L (What I have learned about the topic) typically seen in a K-W-L organizer (Ogle, 1986). The K and W have already been completed by students; the L is to be completed during the research process.

The students should research their questions and complete the organizer(s) they have been given.

Review the methods that can be used to find the information needed to research each of the goals.

- **Students will share their research using the graphic organizer(s).**

Each student is expected to share the following:

- **What did I learn?** (It is suggested that they use the graphic organizer to help them share this information.)
- **What do I want my viewers to learn?** (This information may be a repetition of the "What did I learn?" information but is now shared from a different perspective.)
- **How will I organize the material?** (Typically, this will be done using the format found on the graphic organizer that has been completed by the student.)

- **Students will talk about the strategies they used during their research: graphic organizers, text features, key words, paraphrasing and/or summarization.**

- **Students will utilize their research to develop the documentary.**

The students will...

- review goals – What do you want your audience to know?
- outline scenes.
- develop a script for each scene.
- integrate the scripts into an end product, the documentary.
- assign roles to get ready for rehearsals.
- plan, monitor, and self-evaluate rehearsals.
- videotape, review and edit the presentation.
- show the videotape to selected audiences.

Evaluate functioning

- Review the process involved with the completion of the project.
- Ask the students to retake the assessment.
- Discuss individual strengths and new competencies.
- Talk about the importance of using strategies when reading other expository texts.

Expository Text

The Making of a Documentary

The Pilot Group

Case Example

Background Information

- Blue Heron Elementary School
- Small group-Four 6th grade boys
- 4 of the boys have IEP's, all 4 with SLD
- Met for 10 sessions (9, 60-minute & 1, 30-minute) to learn strategies/develop project
- Met for 3 additional 1 hour sessions to rehearse/film documentary).

Overview of Procedures

- Introduce intervention-purpose and guidelines
- Complete pre self-evaluations
- Introduce expository text strategies
- Research topic by utilizing strategies
- Utilize strategies to write script for documentary
- Complete post-self-evaluations
- Rehearse and film documentary

Daily lessons

- Day 1: Self-assessed academic strengths/competencies and introduced project goals; defined expository text.
- Day 2: Self-assessed personal strategy use; provided overview of project components; introduced K-W Organizer & expository text structures & features; watched brief documentary film example.
- Day 3: Worked on K-W Organizer, selected topics (Revolutionary War & Constitution).

Daily lessons (continued)

- Day 4: Activated background knowledge: What we already know, What we want our audience to know; introduced graphic organizers.
- Day 5 – Continued working with graphic organizers; focused on descriptive structures; began research.
- Day 6 – Continued research; focused on sequential structures/organizers; read, paraphrased and summarized passages.

Daily Lessons (cont.)

- Day 7 – Shared individual research using graphic organizers; planned documentary.
- Day 8 – Developed summary graphic organizer; filled out documentary discussion-planning board.
- Day 9 – Finished documentary planning board; administered post self-evaluation of strategy use; began script writing using paraphrasing and summarizing.

Daily Lessons (cont.)

- Day 10 – Finalized scripts; shared aloud.
- Day 11-13 – Rehearsed and filmed documentary.

Successes

- Students developed their understanding of expository text.
 - They came knowing expository text was “different” than stories and one student could give several examples.
 - By the end of the project, all students could give examples of expository structures and differentiate descriptive vs. sequential passages.
- Students remarked that the graphic organizers were helpful.

Successes (continued)

- Students rated their own strategy use differently on post- than pre- self evaluations.
- Students were extremely invested in the project and worked hard. They were motivated to use the strategies because they were excited to complete the final project.
- They became more interested in the curricular topics because of the motivating final project. (They wanted to show documentary to class).

Challenges

- The amount of time available to work with students was limited and often interrupted by school functions, school vacations, or students’ absenteeism
- Although we were working with relevant class material, classroom teachers were eager for us to cease pulling students out of class once a week.

Recommendations

- Introduce documentary and topic selection in preliminary stages. This allows dove-tailing research with teaching strategies which creates a buy-in from students.
- Work with students on a more regular basis (multiple times per week if feasible). This would decrease time spent reviewing and give more time to practice each strategy before proceeding to the next.

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