



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Purposeful Text Selection to Supplement Core Materials

Woodbridge Elementary School, Delaware • October 2010

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension

Practice: Teach Comprehension Strategies

Highlights

- A reading coach discusses the key considerations in selecting texts and assists a kindergarten teacher with the text selection process.
- Serena Brittingham, K-1 reading coach at Woodbridge Elementary, explains why the school needed to supplement its core reading program with nonfiction texts.
- When selecting text, Woodbridge teachers take into account instructional purpose, group size, text complexity and difficulty, and opportunities for engaging students in discussions.
- Brittingham helps Kim Hastings select appropriate nonfiction texts for her kindergarten students.

About the Site

Woodbridge Elementary School

Greenwood, Delaware

Demographics

52% White

29% Black

18% Hispanic

1% Asian

1% Native American

72% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

16% English Language Learners

10% Special Education

Woodbridge Elementary is a pre-K to fourth-grade school with the largest student population in the state of Delaware. Staff focus on reaching struggling students early and often by implementing various instructional strategies and participating in professional development activities.

- Teachers work with the reading coaches to select narrative and expository texts based on purpose, grade, and students' ability levels.
- Each day students engage in 30 minutes of whole group literacy instruction, while 60 minutes is allocated to small group instruction according to individual student needs.
- School administrators and coaches complete walkthroughs of teachers' classrooms to foster immediate reinforcement and feedback on instructional practice and to motivate teachers to sustain effective practices.
- Comprehension strategies are taught through whole group read-alouds, partner sharing techniques, and independent student center work.
- Beginning in kindergarten, students are encouraged to participate in text discussions with teachers and peers.
- Woodbridge has created a motivating schoolwide environment to engage students with text.

Full Transcript

Serena Brittingham: My name is Serena Brittingham, and I am the reading coach for kindergarten and first grade here at Woodbridge Elementary School.

Our core program that we use could be beefed up a little bit, and we could use some different types of texts. We've found that our core didn't have a lot of nonfiction texts. And so we were able to purchase some books, and we began incorporating those books into our instruction.

Teachers need to keep in mind certain things, especially with text selection. I think it's important for them to remember what their purpose is. Sometimes we are using books during the whole-group time, which our focus is definitely comprehension and vocabulary. But during small group, that's more when we are working on skills and having the students actually do some reading. And so the level of the text in small group would be more important. It doesn't have to be at their level when we are doing whole group. Actually, we want the book to be at a higher level—that it's too hard for them to read, but they can certainly understand with our guidance what the message or what the idea of the story is.

Other things for teachers to remember is the complexity of the text. For kindergarten, we know we try to choose things—especially at the beginning of the year—where they have really a lot of pictures and not so much text, where the ideas and the concepts and messages are simple enough for them to understand. And as we move ahead to first grade, we can kind of bump it up a little bit.

We always try to choose books that are going to allow the teacher to, in their lesson, develop some kind of “turn and talk to your partner” and those kinds of things, and that's helped a lot. We have done that here at our school to have a lot of student-to-student interaction, and it can begin in kindergarten.

Selecting Texts to Support Comprehension

Brittingham: How did the lesson go today on *Apple Trouble*?

Kim Hastings: It was great. It was a perfect story, great vocabulary for the kids, lots of chances for them to make good connections. Definitely a story that I think we could pick out some stories that were similar like that to put in those places and those holes that the kindergarten curriculum has where we're looking for some better stories.

Brittingham: Right, well, guess what? Our books came in.

Hastings: Oh great.

Brittingham: And so I was able to look through some of the boxes, and I picked out some things that I thought might work.

Hastings: Okay.

Brittingham: I know you said, and the other team members said, that some of the stories at the beginning were maybe too hard for the kids. And so I saw this one, and I didn't know if you might think that was a good one.

Hastings: Okay.

Brittingham: It's kind of about the character going to the first day of school.

Hastings: Right. I think what we're definitely looking for, for the beginning of the year, is just really good pictures, not a lot of text on the page.

Brittingham: Well, I think this has great pictures.

Hastings: Yeah, and also some chances for them to interact together and with me.

Brittingham: This one, I didn't know about that, what you would think of that one.

Hastings: Well, the first thing that I think will be great is that it's going to be a great time for us to say, "Boys and girls, this is a nonfiction story."

Brittingham: Oh, absolutely.

Hastings: Real photographs of—

Brittingham: I didn't even think about that.

Hastings: —of real kids and lots of talking about how we're alike, how we're different, that we learn differently, that we look different.

Brittingham: I brought these: nonfiction, *Animal Babies*. And I think we could probably get some more of these because this is about grasslands and polar lands, which I think is an appropriate book for kindergarten, has good vocabulary, and it's kind of—would lead them to some prediction.

Hastings: Right. I was just thinking maybe, in the beginning, early on, we're just kind of finding good ways to partner up and have discussion. So I'm imagining this could be one that we do in the beginning and say, give them the clue, "I have big ears and a long nose called a 'trunk.' Who is my mommy?" And then they could whisper to their partner, "Who do you think?"

Brittingham: So what do you think we'll pick?

Hastings: Well, I think we have some great, great choices. I definitely think I would probably choose this one for one of the early days.

Brittingham: Okay.

Hastings: Even if the message is a little tough, just—I'm thinking about self-portraits, things like that, that they could do that would go along with the story. And just the real photographs; that's enticing to them.