

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Compare-Contrast Graphic Organizer: A *Whale Is Not a Fish*

Lake Forest North Elementary School, Delaware • October 2010

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension
Practice: Focus on Text Structure

Highlights

- Nakia McNair, third-grade teacher at Lake Forest North Elementary School, describes a lesson based on a nonfiction text that compares and contrasts the characteristics of seemingly similar animals.
- For the lesson, McNair created a graphic organizer that helped students summarize similarities and differences and note clue words that indicated whether the author was comparing or contrasting.

About the Site

Lake Forest North Elementary School
Felton, Delaware

Demographics

71% White

23% Black

4% Hispanic

1% Asian

53% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

1% English Language Learners

13% Special Education

Lake Forest North's data-driven culture drives every aspect of the school. Administrators and instructional support staff work closely with teachers to ensure that each classroom offers heterogeneous instructional practices.

- Strategies like whole-group read-alouds and partner sharing, graphic organizers, and modeling and strategy explanation help students understand text structure.
- Comprehension instruction includes an emphasis on what good readers do and the strategies they use.
- Grade-level articulation meetings are held weekly with the reading coach for the purposes of collaborative planning and data review.
- Teachers build on student development of comprehension strategies across grade levels.
- Teachers are provided opportunities to observe peer instruction to better understand student learning in previous grades and comprehension goals in future grades.
- The principal provides strong leadership and motivates teachers to sustain effective comprehension practices, for example, through the use of classroom walk-throughs.
- Targeted professional development is created from benchmark assessment data for improving teaching skills.

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Compare and Contrast Graphic Organizer: *A Whale Is Not a Fish*

Slide 2: Introducing Nakia McNair

My name is Nakia McNair. I teach third grade at Lake Forest North Elementary, located in Felton, Delaware.

Slide 3: Selecting nonfiction text

I really wanted to choose a very good nonfiction text that would definitely match up with our skill, which was comparing and contrasting. The story was called *A Whale Is Not a Fish*, so it gave plenty of opportunities for students to be able to pull those details out.

Slide 4: Creating a graphic organizer

The next thing, I had to make sure that there was a graphic organizer, one that would help them to be able to organize those facts in a way that was very easy for them to understand. And I had a graphic organizer that we use for compare and contrast. However, I made some changes, and I added on clue words this time, so that students will be able to pull those clue words from the text, and that would also help them to be able to tell how things are alike and different.

Slide 5: Teacher modeling

I modeled, first, how to first look at the pictures to show how the two animals—we started off with whale and fish—how they were alike and different. And then we used the subtitles, which gave us a lot of information: We had whale was immense and the fish were smaller. So looking at the subtitles also gave them clues that this is going to be definitely a text that's going to help them compare and contrast. And the way the author designed the book was just like the way the graphic organizer was designed, because the graphic organizer was designed where you had to tell how both things were alike, and the way the author organized the text began with a paragraph that showed how both animals were alike. So I modeled, first, identifying the clue words for comparing the two, telling how they are alike. And modeled how to pull those out and put them on a graphic organizer. And then I did the same thing for showing differences. And so once I did that, they were able to see how to use that text structure to be able to compare and contrast.

Slide 6: Partner collaboration

Then after we got an understanding and had that model, they were able to then work with a partner to do the same thing on their graphic organizer. Partner pairs that were selected, they are normal reading partners. So they are used to working together, based on levels. I usually do either numbered or lettered partners, so they know that partner A will have a job, partner B will have a job. But there would always be an element where they will think first, then they will write, then they will share. Then as a ticket out, or an assessment, I had a different graphic organizer where they used pictures to compare and contrast, so I can just see that they grasp the skill.

Slide 7: Assessing student performance

I assessed student learning today with first getting the thumbs-up, thumbs-down responses. I do that a lot in my class. So that's just a quick little assessment that I just can see if they get it. So once I see that, then it's onto working more independently. So, like the ticket out that I gave them, that was one way that I used to

make sure to see if they were able to use the graphic organizer effectively, they were able to take out the story, the clue words to compare and contrast, and also were they able to—at the end they had to complete a sentence, so they were adding writing to the piece, where they had to complete how two things were alike and complete a sentence about how the two animals were different using their graphic organizer. So that is how I was able to see if they really understood.

Slide 8: Distinguishing fiction and nonfiction structures

When I first showed them the slide that showed the text elements, I got a little worried, because I had some kids tell me that they thought characters were in a nonfictional book. So I had to kind of go back and remind them of the story we read last week, which was fiction, and we focused on fictional text elements like character, setting, and plot. Once they were able to get that background from last week, I think they were able to see, “Okay, all right, so yes, there is a clear difference between the two.”

Slide 9: Helping struggling students

I have a student of mine who is a fictional reader, and nonfiction is not his thing. So then on assessments where they do have short passages that are nonfiction, some of the sources he may just read over and not even look at: charts, subtitles, pictures. And so I think now for him, he’ll be able to look at those things and now do better or be able to comprehend and answer those questions that require him to pull that information out from those sources.

Slide 10: Improving comprehension

Understanding text structure has improved my students’ reading comprehension by allowing them to preview the text before they even read. And noticing parts of the text, especially with nonfiction, that is going to help them to comprehend.

Slide 11: Learn more

To learn more about graphic organizers, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.