



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

We're Ready for Text Structure

Woodbridge Elementary School, Delaware • October 2010

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

Highlights

- Tracy Propes, Grades 2-3 reading coach at Woodbridge Elementary School, explains why it's important to teach text structure beginning in kindergarten.
- Propes describes the differences between narrative and expository text structures.
- Teachers use a Venn diagram that has been adapted by a third-grade teacher to compare and contrast information in an expository text.

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

I'm Tracy Propes from Woodbridge Elementary School. I'm the reading coach for second- and third-grade teachers.

Text structure is really important for kids, because I think it gives them a purpose for reading. It enables them to know how text is organized, and they then know how to attack that text.

I think they're very familiar with a narrative text, where they are used to seeing the characters and the setting, a problem and a solution. But oftentimes, they are not as familiar with an expository text, and I think we need to teach them how that text is organized so that they can take larger chunks of reading that they've done and break it down into smaller, more manageable chunks. Sometimes the kids see this text, and they blank out. They don't know how to break it apart. They don't understand that it's organized in a different way. With an informational text, expository text, they are supposed to gather some kind of

information from that.

There are many tools that can be used to teach text structure, but I truly believe the most important goes back to the teacher and knowing what's happening in their mind and what they're thinking. And the tool that they can give to the students is the way they think aloud and modeling good thinking strategies and good reading strategies. That's most important. But I also think there are some other tools that we can use as teachers to pass on to the students.

Our focus this year has been on graphic organizers. Even in kindergarten, they started with the teacher modeling the Venn diagram. And because they were familiar with that, a teacher in third grade actually took that idea and took it to the next step, and she made a foldable, which—basically, she just folded a sheet of paper over, drew a Venn diagram on the outside. And if you flip up the first flap, that's where you would put a difference, and on the outside, there are the other differences just like the two sides of the Venn diagram. And in the center is where you would put the similarities or the likenesses.

The biggest challenge to teachers for teaching text structure is that they didn't have the resources available before. But now that they have those resources—when we first started this, they were very concerned that it would be too difficult for the kids, but they found that once they started teaching the text structure, and they truly could understand, even in kindergarten. So I think the biggest struggle was more with the teacher teaching it and not thinking the kids would be ready for it. But once they began teaching, they knew that they had the kids and they were excited about it.