

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Preparing Kindergarteners for Text Talk

Woodbridge Elementary School, Delaware • October 2010

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension
Practice: Engage Students With Text

Highlights

- Kim Hastings, kindergarten teacher at Woodbridge Elementary School, explains how she has set up partner routines that support text discussion.
- Hastings describes the value of beginning text discussion at the kindergarten level to engage students and deepen their comprehension.
- She illustrates how even very young students, at the beginning of the school year, can learn routines for partner work when they are provided with the specific guidance (such as how to find a partner, make eye contact, and be a good listener).

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-4 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 walk-throughs 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

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Preparing Kindergarteners for Text Talk.

Slide 2: Introducing Kim Hastings

My name is Kim Hastings. I am a kindergarten teacher at Woodbridge Elementary School in Greenwood, Delaware.

Slide 3: Getting excited about reading

It's important to engage kindergarteners in text discussion. First off, I want them to be excited about books.

And so, I think by engaging them in a text discussion, that gives them more ownership of the book and kind of motivates them a little more to be excited about reading and also, thinking long term of what types of things they will be asked to do with text, setting the stage for that and helping them be prepared for that when the time comes.

Slide 4: Engaging all students

Student collaboration is just a main focus at Woodbridge Elementary School at this time. It just puts participation in a whole different level. I think back to times, the way I would have read stories in the past, and I might have asked those good questions, but I would have called on maybe one or two students to give me the answer. And so over time, I've realized how the number of times students get to respond is so important. And so by partnering them up, even if I can only call on one or two to share out with the class, the collaboration gives me a chance to let everybody have a turn to talk.

Slide 5: Everyone shares

This way, I remind them, "We talked with a partner. We had a great discussion with our partner. So everybody got to share." And also hearing things from your friends tends to be much more convincing. It seems to stick with them. Their comprehension of the story is better by talking about it with a partner instead of just sitting and listening.

Slide 6: Finding partners

The routine that I've established is, each morning, as they're doing a warm-up, I pass out a card, and each card has a picture on it. And there is a set of two, so everybody has a match somewhere in the room. And then on each card, each set has a number one and a number two. So when we're ready, I tell them, "It's time to find your partners."

Slide 7: Taking turns

They find each other, and then they come and sit down together—lots of preparation about "We don't sit down until we've found our partner. And we sit close; Mrs. Hastings needs to be able to tell who your partner is when I look out at the class from my seat"; things like that.

For the number one and number two, that was strictly a way to determine who goes first, so that that was out of the way. So if you are number one that you talk first today. If you are number two on your card, then you go second. And that's how we take turns.

Slide 8: Learning how to be a good partner

Some challenges of that are, lots of times, they just want to lean over and like have words come out of their mouth, but they continue to just look at me, which is tough because I do always say, “Eyes on me, that’s how I know you are listening.” So we’ve worked a lot with “Turn to your partner and give them good eye contact,” what a good partner does, a good partner knows that their partner is listening. Sometimes we would just play some games, like you would tell your partner your favorite color, and then they would have to share what their partner said.

Slide 9: Establishing and practicing routines

So I keep it easy and simple at first, so I can establish that routine. So that part is out of the way. So when we’re ready to have a more in-depth partner discussion, they’re ready to do it. And just lots of practice; if it doesn’t look good, if I don’t like what I saw or like what I heard, then we just stop, and we’ll talk about it, and we’ll do it again. I’ll bring a student up and model, “So-and-so is going to be my partner. Let’s practice what we would do, how we would have a good discussion about this.”

Slide 10: Having conversations

I’m really impressed with what they can do already with the partner. It’s a large class, and so I think that it just really shows what you are able to do with, number one, a large number of students, and, number two, little children who might not even own any books. That’s what amazes me. I think of the conversations that I set up for them and the conversations they have with their friend about this story that we’ve read, and they might rarely have anyone read to them. You know, that part excites me, that I know that they can do it, and everyone can do it.

Slide 11: Assessing conversations

I do assess informally through observation that they’re having appropriate conversations and that the conversations I’ve asked them to have are going to extend their learning. When I go around to them, I want to hear some conversations about the story. And so, for some kids, I can look out, and I can watch them from afar, and I know they have it. And for others, my assessment has to be a little closer. I have to be down there with them; I have to listen to the words that they use to see if they understood today’s story.

Slide 12: Conversation leads to comprehension

I know that at the end of a story that they remember it so much better based on the conversations that they had with a friend than had I done all of the talking through that lesson or if just a few children have been able to participate.

Slide 13: Learn more

To learn more about Preparing Kindergarteners for Text Talk, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.