

Refining our skill at helping students engage in learning

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Prepared for Uncas Elementary
School Teachers

What is it?

“...a cyclical process... planned by the teacher, in which all students ... move between ... action and ...reflection...”

Why, how, what & when?

Why?

- It's Uncas's overarching goal for 2009-10
- Engagement is essential to learning

How?

- Consider suggestions from Mary, Tasha, and John – in the context of what we do

What & when?

- Select a strategy/technique to try between now and next Wednesday
- Let a colleague know how it went

Techniques I've seen...

Physical and kinesthetic approaches

- Readers theater (with blocking), short vowel learning, learning centers, sequenced activities requiring – and challenging students to visit two or three learning stations or centers, ...the “History of our Hive” ETS exercise, getting students up on their feet, student presentation.

Some more...

Effective checks for understanding

- Use of white boards – not just for Cast-a-Spell
- Signaled responses
- Turn and talk
- Structured exit or transition notes and learning journals

Some more...

Scaffolds for learning

- Visual organizers – all sorts (prepared by teacher)
- Numbered sections
- Self-reflection protocols

Some more...

Involve students in instruction

- Let them display learning on overhead
- Jigsaw information gathering (e.g., five types of bridge structures, the characters & conflicts)
- Have students assess their work
- Have students help build assessment rubrics
- Model, model, model...

Time permitting, let's look at

1. Some sentence composing techniques
2. Having students use checklists & rubrics
3. 'Mystery pot' exercise

So, let's try some... sentence composing



Sentence combining

- Teachers met.
- The meeting was yesterday.
- The meeting was by grade level.
- The meeting was with Christie and John.
- The meeting was to discuss pre and post assessment data. (5.8)

Yesterday, grade level teachers met with Christie and John to discuss pre and post assessment data. (16)

Sentence combining: Which do you prefer?

A

- I dropped my ski pole.
- It was an accident.
- It almost hit a skier.
- The skier was passing below the lift.
- I became very embarrassed.

B

After accidentally dropping my ski pole that almost hit a skier passing below, I became very embarrassed.

Why and how?

- Helps students synthesize and organize information and accelerate ‘syntactic maturity.’
 - Helps develop sentence fluency and style.
 - Takes little time to prepare
1. Must include all information
 2. Must not change meaning
 3. Should be combined into as few sentences as possible.

Your turn

- Public education has changed.
- The change is in recent years.
- The change has made demands.
- The demands are greater than ever.

Sentence unscrambling

- and held the bottle for him
- she warmed his milk
- every morning
- as soon as she got up
- tied his bib on

Every morning, as soon as she got up, she warmed his milk, tied his bib on, and held the bottle for him.

- *Charlotte's Web*,
White

Unscrambling to imitate

Model: The air smelled of the damp earth, of the spruce woods, of the sweet springtime. *Charlotte's Web*, White

List:

- of the oncoming monsoon
- of the thick humidity
- of the oppressive heat,
- the morning hinted

Imitation:

The morning hinted of the oppressive heat, of the thick humidity, of the oncoming monsoon.

Unscrambling to imitate:

Model: Astride her web, Charlotte sat moodily eating a horsefly and thinking about the future.

List:

- chewing a beef bone
- Pepper lay contentedly
- and waiting for the mailman
- beside her doghouse

Imitation:

Rationale for sentence composing

- Sentence composing is engaging, allowing for differentiated learning, creativity, and self-assessment.
- It allows students to work together or individually.
- It encourages students to imitate good writing.

Note: This works best with vis-à-vis markers and transparencies. Small groups prepare their versions...

Student self-assessment

- Can begin with asking students what's important. A tougher call with primary grades (but they can use teacher prepared guides)
- Often uses a double column format
- Best to limit the criteria and point range.
- Gives students a chance to weigh in and become less reliant on us.

Sample lead paragraph

Peter Jennings spends his mornings intently reviewing his coin collections by e-mail. This mornings project? Verifying the authenticity of two coins belonging to his Greco-Roman collection, one of the finest privately owned collections existing. “Numismatics is my life. It’s what I live for,” says Jennings. And as former friends observe, it’s all he has these days as he has just begun serving a 40-year sentence for counterfeiting and mail fraud.

Checklist devised with journalism students

	Yours	Mine
• Key information comes as a surprise and appears last.		
• The paragraph includes both descriptive and narrative elements	/3	/3
• The last sentence makes the reader want to continue	/4	/4
	/2	/2

assignment

- Write a periodic paragraph about a vegetarian butcher

Mystery pot

- Encourages students to review and organize content skills and knowledge
- Helps them help each other
- Very efficient as all the planning is up front allowing the teacher to circulate
- Incorporates, visual, tactile, and interactive elements
- A CRISS technique

Last lap: Let's try one

- With two colleagues, organize and paste the slips of paper in your envelope onto the blank sheet.
- Feel free to add information.
- Be ready in two minutes to share and explain your work.