

DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Supporting Teachers' Text Selection

Garfield Elementary School, Kansas • November 2010

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension

Practice: Teach Comprehension Strategies

Highlights

- Willis Pracht, principal at Garfield Elementary, reflects on contributing factors to the school's success, including the value of having a literacy coach.
- Kerry Unruh, a literacy coach, describes ways of training and supporting teachers in their instruction of reading. Unruh works with teachers in planning for instruction, modeling and co-teaching lessons, and analyzing student data.
- Abby Dudley, a kindergarten teacher, explains ways in which Unruh has supported her reading instruction.

About the Site

Garfield Elementary School

Garden City, Kansas

Demographics

81% Hispanic

13% White

4% Other

2% Black
83% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
63% English Language Learners
12% Special Education

Garfield Elementary's engaging and interactive culture is an important component in meeting the individual needs of its high migrant and English language learner student population. At each grade level, staff work to incorporate reading, writing, speaking, and listening into lessons.

- Cooperative learning strategies are used to facilitate student discussion around texts.
- Students learn to identify and implement appropriate meta-cognitive and reading comprehension strategies for selected texts.
- Teachers model reading comprehension strategies using puppets and props.
- The reading coach works one-on-one with teachers to identify appropriate resources, to provide feedback on instruction, and to model effective practices.

Full Transcript

Willis Pracht: I am Willis Pracht, principal at Garfield Elementary, in Garden City, Kansas.

Kerry Unruh: My name is Kerry Unruh. I am a literacy coach at Garfield Elementary School, in Garden City, Kansas.

Abby Dudley: My name is Abby Dudley, and I teach kindergarten at Garfield Elementary, in Garden City, Kansas.

Unruh: My role as a literacy coach is to do job-embedded professional development. I am here to teach and train and support teachers in their teaching of reading. And so, during the day at school I observe teachers as they teach reading, provide feedback on their lessons, model and co-teach lessons, organize grade-level meetings for teachers where we analyze student data and learn together through book study discussions. I also conduct coach meetings, which are one-on-one meetings with each teacher in order to help them plan instruction and analyze student needs.

Pracht: The literacy coaches have both the time and expertise to help teachers at the grassroots level and to do things like task analysis and help extrapolate those results into quality instruction through staff development modeling, things like walkthrough feedback and providing tangible resources that correlate to the students' needs.

The literacy coach, if you will, becomes the onsite expert who has both the knowledge of the pedagogy and instructional research.

Unruh: As teachers supplement the reading series and plan for the differentiated literacy centers, I coach them to incorporate at least two-thirds nonfiction text. We have found that utilizing two-thirds nonfiction pushes our students to use the comprehension strategies with more difficult texts and also builds their background simultaneously.

I meet with teachers individually in order to analyze lessons and plan for instruction. We first determine what the data says that students need to work on. We utilize the curriculum to plan around the comprehension strategy of the week. And then I support teachers as they choose text, either from the reading series or from our leveled book room according to the type of lesson or specific need.

We look for the just-right text to match the lesson's needs as well as fit the students' instructional level.

If we were going to choose text around visualization, that strategy requires students to create mental pictures in order to comprehend. So I might assist teachers in choosing text that has vivid details so the students may practice creating movies in their minds. We have also found that text that doesn't have very detailed pictures or longer text with fewer pictures gives students the opportunity to use that visualization strategy more, because they are not relying on the picture support.

Dudley: Kerry helps me select appropriate texts in a number of ways. She and I look at all of the data as well as the curriculum strategy focus of the week to then decide what specific comprehension strategies we're to focus on. Kerry has taught me how to use the curriculum and all of the resources that we have available when I have a difficult time finding the perfect text for my students.

Every week, I select different texts for the lesson objective or reading comprehensive strategy I plan to use. I select it for guided reading as well as independent reading time. There are also times when I need to select text for differentiated learning centers as my kindergarteners become more proficient readers.

A lot of times, when we select the text, Kerry and I will team-teach together. She will come in and model whole-group lessons as well as guided reading, and she and I will work together in our weekly coach meetings to kind of prepare for the lesson and make sure we have the appropriate books.