

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Establishing Motivating Contexts for Reading and Encouraging Text Discussions

January 2011

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

Highlights

- This multimedia overview highlights key components of the recommendation to create motivating reading environments and to engage students in text discussion.
- Features of effective environments, such as classroom set-up and the nature of tasks and activities are introduced.
- Strategies for engaging students in different formats and structures for text discussion are also outlined.

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on Establishing Motivating Contexts for Reading and Encouraging Text Discussion.

Slide 2: Creating a motivating environment

When students are taught reading comprehension in a motivating environment, they are more likely to become better readers.

A motivating environment is one where:

- There are engaging opportunities for students to read and discuss what they are reading,
- The purpose of reading is clearly conveyed, and
- There is a consistent focus on the larger goal of learning.

Slide 3: Giving reading prominence

Reading should be a prominent consideration in how K-3 classrooms are set up. Classroom libraries should be filled with books that are both interesting to students and clearly organized by theme, for example. Reading areas should have comfortable seating to help make reading together a pleasant experience.

Slide 4: Engaging through choice

Giving choices also helps engage students. Teachers can:

- Allow students to choose from a variety of reading activities or centers;
- Permit students to choose the order in which they complete their work;
- Ask students what interests them and lead them to relevant texts;
- Give students different ways to respond to what they've read, such as writing, discussing, or drawing;
and
- Allow students to choose from a selection of texts that serve an instructional purpose.

Slide 5: Connecting activities to reading

Teachers can engage students through hands-on science activities, dramatic performances, and drawing or crafts that relate to what they read. For example, after reading about plants, a class might plant seeds in small pots. The teacher can help students make meaningful connections between what they've read and their experience.

Slide 6: Helping students face reading challenges

Reading comprehension activities should be challenging but attainable with effort so that students learn to appreciate the value of a challenge. Difficult texts and reading mistakes can be presented as opportunities to learn. Teachers should encourage students to face these challenges, while helping them set goals, monitoring their progress, and providing positive feedback on their performance. This kind of support can increase students' motivation to read.

Slide 7: Discussions

Discussion about text is not only social and engaging, but helps students better understand what they are reading and gives teachers the opportunity to directly support students in their learning. By talking about important reading strategies, such as questioning, summarizing, and re-reading, students gain a clearer sense of how to approach texts.

Slide 8: Planning whole group discussions

Four factors contribute to the success of a whole group discussion. The first two are related to planning:

- Select texts that are compelling enough to spark a discussion, such as stories in which a character faces a real-world problem or dilemma.
- Create a discussion guide with higher-order questions that prompt students to think more deeply about the text.

Slide 9: Sustaining whole group discussions

The other two factors relate to sustaining and expanding the discussion:

- Use follow-up questions that lead students to think about, elaborate on, and justify their answers. Questions like “What makes you say that?” and “Can you explain what you meant?”
- Divide the class into smaller groups, and ask students to discuss the text among themselves.

Slide 10: Small group/partner discussions

Collaborative learning activities can be very motivating for students. Activities need to be carefully structured so that all students work together and see their individual contribution as valuable.

Teachers can have students work in pairs to:

- Read and discuss a text;
- Retell a story, identify main characters, or make predictions about how the story will end;

- Learn interesting facts from informational texts; and
- Perform stories in a skit or play format.

Slide 11: Needs for younger students

It is important to meet kindergarten through third-grade students' needs when engaging in group discussions:

- Start with short discussions, and then expand them as students develop their skills.
- Model discussion behavior.
- Post and refer to class guidelines for discussions.
- Give students time to formulate their thoughts.
- Before a discussion, give students questions to reflect on through either writing or drawing.
- Give students practice by having discussions frequently.

Slide 12: Keeping students on task

Students may need assistance staying on task during group work. This may require close monitoring or assigning responsibilities to students in each group, such as keeping the discussion on task or asking questions.

Younger students might perform better in pairs.

Teachers can provide discussion aids, like graphic organizers, pictures, or question prompts, which students can share and use in their discussion.

Reflecting on group work as a class can lead to improvement over time. Students can do self-evaluations and talk with the teacher about what went well and what needs work.

Slide 13: Conclusion

Creating a motivating classroom environment means offering choices and giving students frequent opportunities to talk about what they read. It involves shifting from thinking about reading as a solitary process to envisioning reading as active engagement with text and others.

Slide 14: Learn more

To learn more about establishing motivating contexts for reading and encouraging text discussion, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.