

# DOINGWHATWORKS



## Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

### *Pumpkin Pie for Halloween: Text Discussion With English Learners*

Graham Road Elementary School, Virginia • October 2010

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension

Practice: Engage Students With Text

#### Highlights

- Jenny English, a kindergarten teacher at Graham Road Elementary School, describes how she develops text discussion skills with her students, many of whom are English learners.
- English explains how she used a student-selected book as the basis for an interactive read-aloud, followed by a small-group activity to retell the story.
- She explains how she tailors instruction to her students' English proficiency levels and the changes in student ability to discuss text that she expects over the course of the school year.

#### About the Site

Graham Road Elementary School

Falls Church, VA

#### Demographics

69% Hispanic

13% Asian or Pacific Islander

10% Black

3% White

4% Other

85% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

58% English Language Learners

12% Special Education

Through extensive school turnaround efforts, Graham Road Elementary has become a high-performing school with an enriched academic program that is tailored to the needs of its diverse student body.

- The school has developed a standards-based reading curriculum to serve as its core reading program.
- Teachers begin with a single-strategy approach and help students learn and use multiple comprehension strategies over time.
- Text discussion begins in kindergarten through establishing partner sharing routines and providing practice with the teacher and peers.
- A balanced literacy approach guides reading and comprehension instruction.
- Language development is incorporated into instruction as a way of increasing comprehension.
- Teachers attend weekly grade-level professional learning community meetings to plan cohesive standards-driven lessons.
- Quarterly data meetings are held to discuss student achievement and to see how specific classes are performing.

## Full Transcript

### Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to *Pumpkin Pie for Halloween: Text Discussion With English Learners*.

### Slide 2: Introducing Jenny English

Hello, my name is Jenny English. I work at Graham Road Elementary in Falls Church, Virginia, and I teach kindergarten.

### Slide 3: Start text discussion in kindergarten

It's important for kindergarteners to acquire text discussion skills, because as they become good readers, they are going to need to be able to tell what they have read about or to make connections to what they have

read about. And if no one asks them any questions about what they are reading, or no one encourages them to think about what they are reading, they are not going to be able to comprehend what they are reading.

#### Slide 4: Whole-group story review

The text was actually a library book that one of the students had picked, and it just looked interesting, so I asked to keep it for a read-aloud. And the kids were very interested in it, and they got really into the book. And I realized there was a sequence of events, and there was repetitive text, and there was a good ending. So it was a book that I wanted to use.

#### Slide 5: Teacher questioning

When reading the books, I wanted to create questions, at this point in the year, that had a lot of one-word answers.

Other questions I asked them were about the lifecycle of a pumpkin; we had been studying that in science. And at the end of the story, the witch plants a seed, which brings us back to the beginning of the story when she first planted the seed to make a pumpkin. So at the end of the story, when she planted the seed again, I asked the students, “Well, what do you think will happen?” And because we had been studying the lifecycle of the pumpkin, they understood that a new seed in the ground means a new pumpkin is going to happen.

#### Slide 6: Small-group retelling

After we did the whole-group activity, and I knew the students felt comfortable retelling the story, I created groups. I gave them the same cards that we used as a whole group to work in small groups with, and they worked together to retell the story from the beginning to the end.

#### Slide 7: Grouping English language learners

In creating the groups, I worked with mostly my English language learners. There were one or two English language learners that do have a higher vocabulary than the others, so I put them in the group. But most of them are either non-English-speaking or limited-English-speaking. And Mrs. Furman was working with a group that has a high vocab but has trouble putting their vocabulary into sentences together or has trouble making sentences with their thoughts. So she was working in guiding their vocabulary to be specific sentences. And then the other groups were a mix of either children that didn't have the vocabulary or students that were a little shy mixed in with students that had a higher vocabulary and would take initiative and help form that

group together to retell the story.

Slide 8: From listening to discussing

In previous instructions, I had been focusing on having the children become good listeners by looking at the reader, making connections in their mind. Now, we are working on verbalizing those connections to the book. And then in the future, we're working on making connections that aren't so personal, but maybe making connections to other books or to other related materials.

Slide 9: Looking ahead to grade 1

I think in kindergarten, text discussion is a lot of teacher asking, the child answering. And in working towards first grade, it's important to create a lot more group activities where they are able to have a discussion. It's not just the one question and one answer; it's "I am going to say an idea. You're going to say an idea. And then we are going to talk about those ideas together and maybe form new opinions."

Slide 10: Learn more

To learn more about text discussion, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.