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Teaching Literacy

Focus Lesson

Assessed Need:

After talking with the teacher, I discovered the students needed help getting motivated to read, so a pre-reading strategy would be the best fit for this class. I will also be reviewing difficult vocabulary prior to reading the story.

Standards:

3.15E1, 3.15E5, 3.15H2

Strategy:

The strategy I will present is called Probable Passage. In this exercise, students have to use vocabulary from the story to build Gist Statements, and infer what they think the text is about.

Text:

For this lesson, I will be using an excerpt from A Wrinkle In Time.

Materials Needed:

- Probable Passage Worksheets
- “Words to Know” hand-outs
- Chart Paper
- Text

Objectives: SWBAT:

- Use a pre-reading strategy to construct a purpose for their reading
- Develop questions for investigation prior to reading
- Understand new vocabulary within the text

Sequence of the Focus Lesson

- ❖ I introduced myself as the “cheerleader” for the day. It was my job to get them motivated to read. I explained that we would be using an exercise called Probable Passage to set a purpose for our reading.
- ❖ I gave the students copies of Probable Passage, and invited them to turn their attention to the board, where I had written the possible categories students could group the words into. I took random words, and inserted them into each category, giving verbal explanations of what I was doing as I went.
- ❖ After I had given students the opportunity to ask questions, I put up a list of words from A Wrinkle in Time, written on chart paper.
- ❖ Students then completed the Probable Passage worksheet in their literacy groups.
- ❖ I went from group to group, asking the students to verify their answers. I noticed that all comments were on task, and the children seemed generally interested in what they were doing.
- ❖ When the students were done, I asked them to share Gist Statements with the class, so we could look for similarities and differences between them.
- ❖ I gave the students a “Words to Know” hand-out, with definitions and visual representations of difficult words they would encounter in the story.
- ❖ I then asked a representative from each group to come up to the front of the room and write a question the group wanted to investigate on a piece of “Chart Paper.” These “To Discover” questions remained hanging in the room for the students to refer to.

- ❖ The students then began reading the story independently. As they read, I circulated and asked the groups if they were finding any answers to the “To Discover” questions. Every group had information to share.

Lesson Analysis

This lesson was a lot of fun to teach. I kept things moving quickly, gave clear directions, and used my sense of humor to establish a rapport with the students. They understood the process of Probable Passage quickly, and worked well in their groups. Their conversations applied to the task at hand, and rarely strayed. When time was up, all the groups had work to share and thoughts to bring to our discussion.

Judging from the physical evidence –the completed worksheets and the “To Discover” chart – and the verbal evidence – the responses I received in our literary discussions – the students did learn what I expected them to learn. The discussion was an especially good way to assess their progress, because the information they were giving me was in direct response to the questions we had built in our pre-reading activity.

I did a good job motivating the students to read the text. I kept my energy up, and tried to build their anticipation of the reading. When one of the groups correctly guessed the plot line of A Wrinkle in Time, I told the class one group was correct, but they would have to *read* to find out. This was a good intrinsic motivator, because it meant the students who guessed correctly would feel pride in knowing they were right all along. I was glad to see this, because I believe it is harder to incorporate intrinsic motivators into a lesson than extrinsic motivators.

In the future, I would try to slow down my introduction, because I missed a few key points I had to address later in the lesson. I wanted to get right to the activity, and I rushed. The students responded well when they were invited to come up to the board and write the “To Discover” questions on the chart themselves. In the future, I will continue to integrate this kind of student involvement in my lessons.

I don’t always have the best confidence in my abilities as a new teacher, but this lesson helped assure me that I could teach and would enjoy a teaching career. In short, I discovered how much fun it is when kids “get it” because of something I did. I learned that I am good at assessing children’s understanding through pencil-and-paper mediums and through small group discussion. I also found that if I am consistent with my expectations for behavior, the students remain behaved and on task. Even though I was the teacher of this lesson, I learned just as much from the students.

****Note: No pencil-and-paper evidence is available for assessment, because the students were allowed to hold on to their worksheets for future reference. I provided the Probable Passage worksheet, the list of words we used to complete it, and the “Words to Know” handout.*