

Teacher Commentary: Learning from Nonfiction – Grade 2

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Before the Lesson

I've been teaching second grade for 3 years. I taught first grade for 13 years. I teach at Inman Elementary School, in Inman, SC. We are a Title I school, so we have children of all different backgrounds and support at home with us. I have 8 ELL students in my class who do not necessarily speak English at home, so this is where they learn their English and at home they are learning another language. The good thing is, we have lots of Russians who can translate for each other. We make sure that they have a buddy. Right now, with my class, we have about 4 of them who are still reading below grade level. Most of those are my ELL learners.

That compares to where they started in the year – we had a few more that were below, so several of those have bumped up to grade level. About 4 more additional children came in below that have bumped up. 21:28

I am seeing some changes in their IR. They're older now and more mature, and pointing out that they're reading to learn, not learning to read has been a big factor for this group, because it makes them feel very proud of themselves that they can do this. If they get stuck on a word, it's just a bump in the road and they keep on going, and can figure it out other ways. That's why they were Googling some of the concepts they weren't sure about. 28:48 Now I don't have to watch them like a hawk, I can really focus on the children I'm conferring with, and I really don't have to stop and speak to anyone. They are on task more; they're enjoying it more.

We've been focusing on nonfiction for about 3 weeks now. We're about to go into our study of animals in science, and so we're going to use what they already know to help them do the research and form their own expert projects on these animals. They're really enjoying this nonfiction, and the fact that they're going to get to teach their peers something totally outlandish that they didn't know. That's why they're trying to find the most outrageous facts so they can shock their friends

Mini-Lesson

I chose today's mini-lesson to show a review and conglomeration of each of the lessons we've done so far, and to point out how important each of those are. There are things that we need to teach the children – what background knowledge is, and why we need to think about that first, and teach them how to stop, think, and realize, hey, I just learned something new; teach them to listen to those voices in their heads and teach them to be thinking of a question, to be wondering as you start to open the book.

Some of the lessons that I've done to support the children learning during nonfiction – one of the first ones was to stop, think, and react, to teach them what their brain says when they learn new information, because if you don't point that out to them, and teach them how to think that way, they're not recognizing, and they're just kind of continuing to read. So you have to teach them to listen to what your inner voice is saying, and think about it, and react to it. If they hear their inner voice have a reaction, that was probably new learning for them. So just to stop, and realize that. Another mini-lesson I did was to start reading with a question in your mind. In that lesson they chose a book, and they had their sticky notes, and they had to write down a question before they opened the book. So during that practice, they wrote down their question, and then they were allowed to read the book. I taught them to look in the Table of Contents to see maybe where that answer might be. And sometimes it wasn't in the book. Then we said, that's OK, what else did you learn? Did you still learn something? They wrote down the answer to their question if they found it, and if not, they wrote something else that they learned. And of course the learning from text features, that was the big one, something that we spent

several days on.

That was hard for them. When I started I thought it was going to be a lot easier for them, but they're used to just sitting down and reading the book. They weren't used to using captions, and headings, and the glossary and those sorts of things. So that was hard for them. 02:15 We actually had to back up and do it with partners, so they helped each other through it.

So having a partner, they kind of kept each other in check, hey did we use this text feature? That was the first lesson we also did using Padlet. So they had to put in the Padlet the title of the book, and then something that they learned, and which text feature they learned it from – did they learn it from a photograph, did they learn it from a map, or a caption. So that held them accountable for that.

And the last one that I guess I'll mention is bk, background knowledge, and that teaches them to get their brain thinking before they open it up, thinking what do I already know about this? So that's why I chose today's lesson because it kind of showed it all. We want to keep them under 15 minutes, so we don't lose them, but today was kind of a culmination of all we had done, so I kind of threw it all in there because it was sort of a review lesson.

Transition to Independent Reading: Using the Padlets

I used the Padlets first of all because we're used to using the sticky notes, which is how we started out at the beginning of the year, and how we started doing this nonfiction. 30:42 Sticky notes just kind of get out of control. I do have them, and I keep them in my notebook here, but it takes time to get them in the right places and go back and read over them and focus on certain children and go back to their page. When we do it on the Padlet, it puts it all in the same spot. This is how the Padlet prints out. You can save it to your computer and you always have it in your google drive and you've got it all in one place. You can also go back and see what kinds of books they're reading and interested in. When it's time to purchase new books, you can figure out what they would like the most. Padlet is a better way for me to keep up with what they're doing and learning and hold them accountable. Also we just got the Chrome Books a few months ago, so that's a brand new thing, and anything they can type on their Chrome Books they are excited about. And they're also excited that it's going to be projected for everybody to see, because a sticky note they just turn into me, but with the Padlet, everybody sees what you're typing, and they really like that.

It really wasn't hard to teach them how to use Padlet. They had already learned how to use Google Classroom, and they already had Google Classroom bookmarked on their Chrome Books. So I just shared the link for the Padlet in the classroom and named it boys or girls or whatever their [sharing] group is going to be that day. You can quickly go in and create a Padlet and share it immediately. So all they have to do is press the + button and start typing. So it's easy.

Group Sharing 1

How I structure sharing now is different than how we did in the beginning of the year. At the beginning of the year, it was mostly whole group. I had to do a lot of modeling of how to share, and not only how to share, but how to respond to the person who had just shared, and learning how to talk about the book. 11:08 In the beginning of the year it's mostly whole group, because it's things everyone needs to hear. And now they are better readers and they're learning from their reading. I have a student teacher and she's really good, so we separate them into two groups to share. #1, some of the children might be more likely to share, feel more comfortable in a smaller group rather than with the whole class. And also they get to learn from more different people each day. And more children get to share, because if it's just one big group, we only have time for a few. But with 2 groups, it doubles the number of kids who get to share and it doubles the amount of things the kids are learning.

The benefit of changing up the groups, I think it will keep them more interested and give them a different audience to share with. Yesterday they met with boys and girls and we tried it again today, and we switched so I met with both groups. And we're going to try maybe letting them choose a team captain and choose their teams so they have a different audience. Today the girls knew they were sharing with girls and boys with boys. So I think if you know who your audience is before you go to do your learning, that helps maybe with what you choose to share.

Closure: Future Plans

In my upcoming IR lessons, I want to focus on 2 things. The first thing I want to focus on is to teach them to have their ELA notebook beside them as they are reading. We won't always use the Padlet. That's just one way of holding them accountable. We'll go back and forth between using the Padlet and taking notes in their notebook, like they will do in the future. So I want them to sit their notebook beside them and as they come across more questions, if they wonder about anything as they're reading, jot it down. That will encourage them to want to learn more, or research more, maybe we have another book on that, or when we go to the library once a week maybe they can check out another book on that topic if they get really interested. Then they write down their questions so they remember what they wanted to learn. So that's one thing I want to teach them to do. 39:58 Another thing that I want to go over is how their bk merges with their new learning. When their new learning comes in, it's like a merge, like getting on a highway. So I'm going to use the highway and how they merge into traffic, and maybe show them some videos of how traffic joins each other and how their new learning should join in with their background knowledge and just increase that. And then we also want to talk about misconceptions as they're reading. They may have misconceptions about whatever they just learned. If you're reading about a certain type of animal and you thought it was a mammal, or you thought it was a fish and it ends up being a mammal. Then, OK, we're going to talk about, maybe that's a pothole, that you need to go around. If it's just a little misconception, we're going to say, that's a pothole, let's go around it and get back on track. But if it's a major misconception that they had, be aware of it, and maybe you need to completely get off the exit and take a different road. So that's the picture I want them to have in their heads about their new learning merging with their bk.