October skills focus: Summarizing

THE STANDARDS SAY:
Across ALL content areas, College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading require that ALL students shall “determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.”

Across grade levels, in literary and informational texts, students:
- **In grades 4-5**: summarize the text
- **In grade 6**: provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments
- **In grades 7-12**: provide an objective summary of the text

In History/Social Studies texts, students:
- **In grades 6-8**: provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions
- **In grades 9-10**: provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of a text
- **In grades 11-12**: provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas

In Science/Technical Subjects texts, students:
- **In grades 6-8**: provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions
- **In grades 9-10**: provide an accurate summary of the text
- **In grades 11-12**: summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms

As you can see, summarizing is an essential skill across all content areas, and objectivity and accuracy are highly prized also. So, just how should we teach our students to condense the author’s words or ideas without altering the meaning or providing interpretation even though they are using their own words? Our goal this month is to share with you tried and true summarizing strategies. We are presenting student strategies that can be used in all subjects to summarize accurately and objectively.

**Eku Writing Project**
**Content Area Literacy Task Force**

**Our Mission...** We are here to help teachers connect with other professionals in order to share a variety of tested and proven classroom strategies. Each month we will focus on a different literacy skill and bring you an overview of the skill as well as a variety of resources and strategies to use across all content areas.

**A Closer Look:**
Summarizing in the Classroom

**Recommended Reading:**
What We Recommend You Check Out This Month

**Content Area Literacy Task Force:**
Who we are, what we do
Summarizing:

Graphic Organizers

Maggie Brewer, Social Studies

Social Studies teachers have a large number of people, places, dates, battles, and events to help their students organize in addition to the vast amount of vocabulary that is part of their content. In teaching my World Civilizations classes about Imperialism in Latin America, I find this to be particularly daunting. During this time period Mexico alone has numerous presidents and revolutionary figures, not to mention the people and events that affected Cuba, the Philippines, Panama, Guam, and Puerto Rico.

One method I find useful when summarizing information that includes a large number of names or dates is a graphic organizer. In his book, *Summarization in Any Subject*, Rick Wormeli explains that “a person’s ability to retrieve information accurately and completely has a lot to do with how it first enters her mind when she is learning it.” He further explains the importance of making meaning for our students as well as providing visual representations.

The particular graphic organizer I help my students create for their study of Imperialism in Latin America starts with a blank piece of paper. In the middle of the paper students write “Imperialism In Latin America.” Students label each corner with the name of one country in the order they arise in the reading: Mexico, Cuba, Panama, and the Philippines. Students then list the people and events they read about for each country (Mexico: Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, Porfirio Diaz, Emiliano Zapata, Francisco “Pancho” Villa, and Venustiano Carranza, Cuba: Jose Marti, Spanish American War - Property of USA: Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines - Platt Amendment, Panama: Panama Canal, the Philippines: Emilio Aguinaldo). In the middle of the graphic organizer, under the title, students list the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 and the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904 and briefly explain each as they read about it.

Rick Wormeli explains, and I have found it to be my experience, that although elementary teachers readily use graphic organizers, those of us who teach older children often expect our students to be able to create these visual organization structures for themselves. In actuality, these older students still need teachers to guide them as they create a graphic organizer that will “increase understanding and long term retention.”

Journal Writing

Brittany Turner, Mathematics

There are two main parts to mathematics instruction: computation and application. The application aspect requires students to develop deeper understanding of key math concepts. As a math intervention teacher I work with students who are lacking in either one or both of these areas. While computation is often the main focus in an intervention classroom, problem solving is equally important to teach. This is where summarization can prove to be highly beneficial. Writing a summary requires a thorough understanding of the process. The student must have mastered the content in order to rewrite the steps for solving a problem in his or her own words.

Summaries in a math classroom can be submitted verbally through discussion or in journal writing as a formative assessment. Using summarization may eliminate anxiety on students who struggle with basic facts and are highly reliant on calculators because it allows them to focus on process rather than computation. Students are also more likely to retain important mathematical ideas as well as increase their fluency with content area vocabulary if they are asked to write summaries. Student reflection through journal writing to summarize content while sharing with their peers may also cause them to self correct errors in their problem solving strategies. Summarization forces students to know the “how” and “why” of mathematics.
Summary Ball
Lisa Antoniou, Science

This kinesthetic activity is a great way for students to reflect on a recently read content and summarize as a group what they have learned. After reading a passage and/or article, place your students in a circle and...

- Begin by tossing an inflated ball to any student.
- Student has 3 seconds to state any fact, concept, or skill recently presented (information from our article for today)
- Student tosses the ball to another student who then has 3 seconds to do the same.
- If a student cannot think of something, then he/she sits down after tossing the ball.
- Students cannot repeat a fact, skill, etc. that has already been stated.
- Keep going until only one student is standing. You can have a small prize, bonus, or other incentive.
- Kids love it!

Midas Touch
Jennifer Bernhard, Literacy Specialist

Using the MIDAS touch to summarize text

Our Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects (RI.2 6-12) underscore the importance of summarizing complex text accurately and without bias or opinion. Using the MIDAS touch to separate the gold from the gravel is a systematic approach to help readers mine for the

M - main idea
I - identify supporting details
D - disregard unimportant information
A - analyze redundant/unnecessary information to determine its importance
S – simplify, categorize, and label important information.

For an example of this strategy applied to a PLVS text on Motorcycle Helmet Use Laws go to:
http://teach.clarkschools.net/jbernhard/literacy_web/ContentAreaLiteracy/SummarizingPLVSText.pdf.

Literature Plot Diagram
Mona Eldridge, Language Arts

When summarizing literary or short stories, students must take elements from the story and construct a summary in their own words.

While reading short stories, students fill out a plot line diagram which includes the exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, author’s theme, symbolism, foreshadowing, and irony.

Using the information they write on the plot diagram, students construct a summary in their own words. As an introduction to summarizing short stories, I read aloud, or we listen to a common story such as “The Three Little Pigs” and construct a plot line and write a summary of the story together. This activity helps them to stay focused on the task and to write about only the important facts that actually happen in their short story.
From the Library
Media Specialist:
Texts for Summarizing
Katie McClain
Kindergarten-3rd Grade
-This Year's Garden by Cynthia Rylant
-Uncle Jed’s Barbershop by Margaree K. Mitchell
-My Grandmother’s Journey by John Cech
-And Still the Turtle Watched by Sheila MacGill-Callahan
-Charlie Anderson by Barbara Abercrombie
Grades 3-6
-Baseball Saved Us by Ken Mochizuki
Elijah’s Angel by Michael J. Rosen
-The Stranger by Chris Van Allsburg
-Rose Blanche by Roberto Innocenti
-Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco
Middle and High School
-Waiting to Waltz, a Childhood by Cynthia Rylant
-The Devil’s Arithmetic by Jane Yolen
-A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck
Always Remember Me: How One Family Survived World War II by Marisabina Russo
-Rules by Cynthia Lord

Instructor Resources
-Strategies that Work by Stephanie Harvey
-Comprehension Strategies for your K-6 Literacy Classroom by Divonna Stebick and Joy Dain
-Teaching for Deep Comprehension by Linda Dorn
-Mosaic of Thought by Keene and Zimmerman
-Revisit, Reflect, and Retell by Linda Hoyt
-Reading with Meaning by Debbie Miller
-Guiding Readers and Writers by Irene Fountas

Word Problems
Amanda Terry, Mathematics
When summarizing in mathematics, word problems are where the skill is most used for younger students. Students must be able to read what the text is saying in order to pull out information needed to solve the problem. Summarizing in mathematics is helpful in making sure students are able to understand the variety of concepts needed to complete the problem at hand.

A strategy that could be used to assist with summarizing in math is Think-Pair-Share. Have each student think, on their own, of what the problem is telling them to do. Then have them write it down. Next, have the students share with a partner and justify why they are correct. Last, share with the class coming up with what the problem is asking and what information led to the answer.

Coming Soon:
November: Vocabulary
December: Evidence and Support
January: Mentor Texts
February: Critique and Analysis
March: Publishing Opportunities

Our goal is to bring you a variety of classroom strategies each month!
Recommended Reading:
Summarization in Any Subject: 50 Techniques to Improve Student Writing by Rick Wormeli

This book is a go-to resource for the teacher contributors of this newsletter, which even features strategies from the book such as the summary ball, Think-Pair-Share, graphic organizers, and journal writing.

From Amazon.com:
Rick Wormeli, a teacher certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, makes the case that summarization is not only one of the most effective ways to improve student learning, it’s also one of the most flexible, responsive, and engaging.

Here, you’ll find a classroom-tested collection of written, spoken, artistic, and kinesthetic summarization techniques for both individual assignments and group activities across the content areas. Suitable for students in grades 3-12, these techniques are easily adjustable to any curriculum and presented with ample directions and vivid, multidisciplinary examples. They are valuable additions to every teacher’s repertoire.