Teaching ELLs to Deconstruct Writing

Visible Literacy Series

The goal is to share a process of helping ELLs deconstruct writing to discover how different genres use language.

Research

Learning a language is most effective when a more knowledgeable person offers guidance to the learner in a shared context (Martin & Rose, 2012).

The elements of successful language learning consist of social interactions, shared meaning, and scaffolding (Hyland, 2011; Minay & Stieglitz, 2016; Meier, 2009).

The Process

1. Select a Mentor Text

The mentor text should be in the genre that the writing prompt requests.

2. Deconstruct the Mentor Text

Guide students to deconstructing the writing genre by identifying the job of each paragraph. Have ELLs describe how the author communicates the meaning.

3. Co-Construct Text

Allow students to collaboratively construct a text that incorporates the language features identified during the deconstruction.

4. Student Construction

ELs compose their own text using the insights developed during the deconstruction and joint construction.

Meto-Cognitive Reflection

Students reflect on the steps of composing the text. This reflection helps them internalize both the skill set and the process learned.

Takeaways

- Writing is an invisible task.
- Deconstructing mentor texts with ELLs teaches the way language is used in different genres.
- Teaching students to think metacognitively about the writing process helps them transfer the skills to other contexts.

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