



bridges to learning

research. practice. results.

Bridges to Learning connects educators with knowledge and research that shows every student can learn when provided cognitively challenging instructional opportunities, and learning environments can flourish when collaboration is valued, voice is honored, and agency is realized.

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IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE IN ACTION



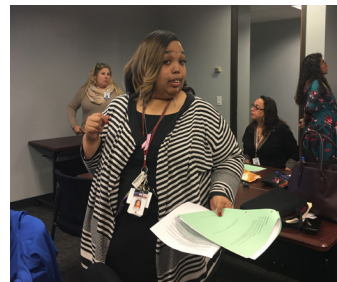
Using student-centered classroom routines to improve comprehension of complex texts

Allison Escher
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The Networks for School Improvement (NSI) work taking place among Dallas ISD (DISD), the Institute for Learning, the University of Pittsburgh School of Education Center for Urban Education, and the Learning Research and Development Center, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has largely focused efforts on improving instructional rigor, providing better supports for English language learners, and improving cultural relevance.

One particular change idea that teachers have been testing in order to improve instructional rigor is the use of student-centered routines. When we ask students to engage in cognitively challenging work, we recommend doing so through a set of routines: individual writing on a question or task, sharing of ideas in pairs and trios, and whole group discussion. These rituals and routines, derived from research on cognitive apprenticeship, are designed to engage all students as learners in collaborative problem solving, writing to learn, making thinking visible, establishing text-based norms for discussions and writings, ongoing assessment and revision, and metacognitive reflection and articulation as regular patterns in learning. Additionally, these

routines support the Principles of Learning, specifically Self-Management of Learning and Clear Expectations.



Using a complex and meaningful text, DISD teachers collaboratively planned a comprehension task to use with students. The task included a high-level question that asks students to make sense of the big ideas in the text, opportunities for students to write about the text informally through quick writes, and opportunities to metacognitively reflect on how their thinking about the text changed through talking and writing.

Additionally, teachers created [student-centered task sheets](#) to help students

- understand the purpose for the work that they will be doing, which sets up clear expectations for students as well as a rationale for why they are engaging in this particular task.
- understand the steps in the task as well as gain some insight into how to complete

new activities or skills, such as providing tips for completing a quick write if that is new for students. These scaffolded steps present an opportunity for students to self-manage their learning by working towards the goal in incremental steps, allowing space for questions, connections, and metacognition.

- reflect on how their thinking has changed about the big ideas in the text and how they learned from working with classmates, which again promotes self-management of learning through metacognition and gives students opportunities to manage their own learning by evaluating the feedback they get from others.

This test of change will be adopted as teachers overall are seeing an increase in students' repertoire of academic skills. This is evidenced by the number of students who complete quick writes, who share text-based thinking during conversation, and who state accurate or mostly accurate understandings of big ideas. We look forward to continuing to understand how engaging in the work carried by a task sheet can provide opportunities for students to engage in high-quality and rigorous work. ■