

Introduction

Welcome to the video overview of how to link CORE reading skills across ALL content areas. My name is Kristi Santi, Professor of Special Populations at the University of Houston. I am a team member of the UH AIPaT Model Demonstration Project and want to take a moment to share with you our team members. The goal of this session is to describe the ways in which teachers can plan together to help students reduce their cognitive load and generalize reading skills across content areas.

Concept: Linking Core Content Across Content Areas

The cognitive challenges that students face when learning to read are not limited to a single subject area, but rather span across all content areas. To truly support students' reading development, it is essential to recognize the interconnectedness of reading skills and subject-specific knowledge. By understanding the principles of cognitive load theory and applying them to reading instruction, educators can create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

Cognitive load theory emphasizes the importance of managing the cognitive demands placed on learners, especially when they are acquiring new and complex skills like reading. By carefully structuring the learning experience and providing appropriate support, teachers can help students navigate the challenges of letter recognition, decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary integration without overwhelming their cognitive resources.

One key strategy is to integrate reading skills seamlessly into content area instruction. For example, when teaching a science lesson, educators can incorporate vocabulary-building

activities that reinforce word study skills, such as analyzing word roots and affixes. Similarly, when exploring a historical text in social studies, teachers can guide students in applying comprehension strategies to make connections between the text and their prior knowledge.

By weaving reading skill development throughout the curriculum, educators can provide students with multiple opportunities to practice and generalize their skills across various contexts. This approach not only strengthens students' reading proficiency but also deepens their understanding of subject-specific content.

Furthermore, by carefully selecting texts that gradually increase in complexity and providing scaffolded support, teachers can help students build their reading stamina and confidence over time. This gradual progression allows students to tackle more challenging texts while minimizing cognitive overload.

Ultimately, by viewing reading as an integral part of all content areas and leveraging the insights of cognitive load theory, educators can create a rich and supportive learning environment that fosters students' growth as skilled and confident readers.

As the graphic on this slide illustrates, reading skills form the core of all instruction, while English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies comprise the content areas.

This slide further elaborates on this concept by highlighting the connection between core reading skills and content-specific instruction. Word study involves teaching students how words work, including decoding multisyllabic words, learning morphological units, syntax, semantics, and so on. Vocabulary instruction aims to teach students ways to decipher words with morphological analysis, homonyms, homophones, figurative language, semantics, and more. Comprehension strategies help students make connections to their world and interpret the

author's meaning. By incorporating these skills into content-area lessons, teachers can support students' reading development without compromising subject-specific learning objectives.

Implications for Teachers

To effectively link core reading skills across content areas, teachers should:

1. Collaborate during grade-level planning meetings to develop strategies for integrating reading skills into all subjects.
2. Pre-teach content-specific vocabulary using word study skills, such as morphological analysis, to help students tackle complex words.
3. Provide opportunities for students to practice fluency through activities like partner reading in various content area texts.
4. Encourage students to demonstrate comprehension and writing skills by reflecting on content-specific concepts in journals or other written assignments.
5. Adapt and tailor reading skills to match students' needs, particularly in upper elementary grades where phonemic awareness may be less relevant.

Closing

Integrating core reading skills across all content areas is essential for reducing students' cognitive load and promoting the generalization of these skills. By strategically incorporating word study, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension activities into every lesson, educators can support students' reading development without sacrificing content-specific learning.

Collaborative planning and adaptable instruction are key to successfully linking core reading skills across the curriculum, ultimately lessening the risk of reading difficulties and fostering student success.

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