

Assessing Independence: Preview I

Why?

- To figure out how a text is organized and make a plan for previewing to build background

How?

- Look through the entire text quickly. Notice the text features the author used to organize the text.
- Quickly describe the overall organization of the text.
- Decide how to proceed with a second preview to build background: What will I read to learn what this text is about and set myself up for learning from the text?

Gathering data to inform instruction and to assess independence with this process

What will I observe a student doing/saying that will indicate that my instruction has been effective in helping his child become independent with Preview I?

- Without prompting, the student begins previewing
- Eyes move across each page
- Turns page(s) to preview to the end
- Quickly describes the way the whole text is organized, referring to the major text features used to provide the organizational pattern (e.g., *“The author used headings to organize the text into major topics, and used paragraphs to organize ideas under each heading. There are also some graphics with captions to show us what the text is about.”* Note that the student is not expected to name every text feature or what it is used for, but simply to name the major text features used by this author in this text to provide an overall organization.)
- Quickly describes what s/he will do to build background during Preview II (e.g., *I’m going to closely read the title and the headings to build background. If I need to, I’ll go back and read the first sentence of each paragraph. I should be able to explain, in my own words, what the piece is about, and I’ll raise questions about ideas, concepts and words that I don’t understand*

Now what? Small Group Instruction

Teaching for independence relies heavily on a teaching/learning cycle that drills down to the level of addressing the needs of each individual student. Small group and individualized lessons that focus on what students still need to learn help students to put in place the processes necessary to independently construct meaning across complex informational texts.

After providing one or two whole group mini lessons in how to do whatever it is you are trying to teach students to do, step back and observe your students as they work independently. *But don't help!* You are trying to find out what they can do on their own, not what they can do with your assistance. Observe and collect data on what they are now able to do on their own (or with the assistance of your anchor charts).

The time you spend observing will pay off quickly as you discover what individuals control, almost control, and where they still need instruction. Use these data to put together small groups of students with similar needs and provide short, focused lessons to take them from where they are to where they need to go next.

For example,

- Some students will demonstrate that they know how to do a quick initial preview. They know how to quickly describe the organization of a text and are able to make a plan for previewing to build background. Give them texts and let them go to work.
- You may have 2-3 students who still don't understand which text features (e.g., headings and paragraphs vs. bold print and italics) authors use to organize texts. Gather them up and do a small group lesson. Guide them through using and talking about how these major text features provide an overall organization while other text features (bold print, italics, insets) are used to draw attention to concepts and ideas. Help them practice finding and describing major text features in one or two articles. End the lesson with specific instructions for what they will now do differently. For example, *"So we know that authors use many, many text features when they craft texts. When we do a quick preview to find out how an author organized a particular text, which ones really help us figure out the overall organization?...So which ones will you pay the most attention to when you preview?...and which ones will you read closely for Preview II?"* Release them to go and practice.
- Another group may know which text features to attend to, but go into long, drawn out explanations that don't get to the point. Gather them together in your small group space, provide an example of a quick explanation versus a long, winding one, then give them a couple of texts, pair them up, and put them to work in front of you. Observe. Move in and out as needed to help them reshape their explanations. End the lesson with specific instructions for what they will now do differently. For example, *"So we know that authors use*

many, many text features when they craft texts. When we do a quick preview to find out how an author organized a particular text, we need to be able to quickly explain to ourselves which text features we will read closely to build background. Just enough to tell yourself what they author used to organize the text and what you will use to build background. Release them to go and practice.

Learning how to do Preview I will take most students a couple of days. Others may need a week or so. Keep in mind a few things:

1. They don't have to be able to do everything in Preview I to go on with Preview II
2. The purpose is not to be able to rattle off the purpose of particular text features; rather, it is to *use text features to guide meaning-making*
3. Small groups are flexible and are put together based on the observation data that you collect on a regular basis. A particular group may come together for just one lesson or a short series of lessons. As soon as most of the students in a group demonstrate independence, the group is disbanded. If an individual student still needs instruction, that instruction should be provided in a group of one.