Resources

Web sites:
- Readwritethink has lesson ideas (http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/) for teaching students to read informational texts (www.readwritethink.org).
- Reading Rockets has ideas for using informational texts (http://www.readingrockets.org/reading-topics/content-area-teaching-and-learning) (www.readingrockets.org).

Recommended reading:

Heisey, Natalie, and Linda Kucan. 2010. "Introducing Science Concepts to Primary Students Through Read-Alouds: Interactions and Multiple Texts Make the Difference." *The Reading Teacher* 63 (8): 666–676. (http://www.readingrockets.org/article/41557)

Designated ELD Vignette

The example in the Vignette 3.5 illustrates good teaching for all students with a particular focus on the needs of EL children and children with special needs. In addition to good first teaching, EL children benefit from intentional and purposeful designated ELD instruction, which Vignette 3.6 illustrates.

Vignette 3.6 Designated ELD Instruction in First Grade Unpacking Sentences

Background:

During an integrated ELA and science unit on bees, Mrs. Fabian observes all of her students carefully as they discuss the science concepts and use new language (see Vignette 3.5). She finds that some of her EL students at the Expanding level of English language proficiency are having difficulty describing and explaining their ideas using domain-specific and general academic vocabulary and complex sentences. This makes it difficult for them to convey their understandings of the content she is teaching them, and she suspects that if they if they're not understanding the language in the texts, they may not be fully understanding the science concepts.

Lesson Context:

Mrs. Fabian meets with her first grade team and asks for their ideas in addressing her EL students' language learning needs. The other teachers on the team share that they've had similar challenges, and they decide to work together to plan a series of designated ELD lessons, differentiated by English language proficiency levels, to address their students' language learning needs. The team begins by analyzing the informational science texts they are using for a) the language that is critical for students to understand the science content and b) language that they would like for their students to produce orally and in writing. Some of this language is domain-specific vocabulary, which the teachers decide to address daily in both integrated ELA/science and in designated ELD.

In addition to vocabulary, the team also notices that many of the sentences in the informational texts for instruction are densely packed with information, and they determine that rather than simplifying the language for their EL students, they should delve into the language so that their EL students can begin to understand it better. They refer to the CA ELD Standards to see what types of vocabulary and grammatical structures their EL children at the Expanding level should be able to use, and they incorporate this guidance into their planning. They decide to show their students how to "unpack" some of the densely packed sentences in the science texts they are using. They learned this technique in a professional learning seminar provided by their district, and they've adapted it to meet their students' needs. The write the procedure they will use so that they can refine it after they see how it works.

1. Start with a text you are already using.
2. Identify sentences students find challenging to understand.
3. Focus on meaning: Show students how to unpack the meanings in the sentence by writing a list of simple sentences below it that express the meanings of the sentence.
4. Focus on form: Show students important features of the sentence (e.g., how conjunctions are used to connect two ideas in a complex sentence, how propositional phrases are used to add details, vocabulary).
5. Guided practice: Guide the students to help you with steps 3 and 4.
6. Keep it simple: Focus on one or two things and use some everyday language examples, as well as examples from the complex texts.

(Adapted from Christie (2005); Derewianka (2012); Wong Fillmore 2012)

In today's lesson, Mrs. Fabian will introduce the "sentence unpacking" technique in order to model how to read/listen to their texts more closely. The learning targets and cluster of CA ELD Standards Mrs. Fabian focuses on are the following:

Learning Target: The students will discuss how to join two ideas to show when things are happening.

CA ELD Standards (Expanding): ELD.PI.1 – Contribute to class, group, and partner discussions by listening attentively, following turn-taking rules, and asking and answering questions; ELD.PI.7 – Describe the language writers or speakers use to present or support an idea (e.g., the adjectives used to describe people and places) with prompting and moderate support; ELD.PII.6 – Combine clauses in an increasing variety of ways to make connections between and to join ideas, for example, to express cause/effect (e.g., She jumped because the dog barked.), in shared language activities guided by the teacher and with increasing independence.

Lesson Excerpts:

During designated ELD time, Mrs. Fabian tells her students that in the science books she reads to them, there is often a lot of information packed tightly into the sentences, so she is going to show them some ways to "unpack" the sentences so they can understand the meaning better. She shows her students a tightly packed suitcase.

Mrs. Fabian: Sometimes, it is hard to see what all the things are inside the suitcase when it is all packed in tightly like that. (Pulling out some of the things that are packed inside - a shirt, a pair of pants, some books and shoes. When we *unpack* the suitcase, we can see all the different things that are in there. Some sentences are similar to the suitcase. Sometimes it is hard to see all the different things that are inside of a sentence, but when we *unpack* it, we can see the different meanings in it.

Mrs. Fabian reads a passage from one of the informational texts about bees that she has previously read and discussed with the whole class. She follows the procedure her team has decided to use in order to show the students how to "unpack" densely packed sentences for their meanings.

Mrs. Fabian: Children, today we're going to be looking closely at a couple sentences we've seen in the books we've been reading about bees. Here's the first sentence.

She shows the children a sentence from the book *The Honeymakers* by Gail Gibbons, which is written on a sentence strip and placed in the pocket chart.

"As the forager bee collects nectar, she carries pollen from flower to flower" (Gibbons, p. 15)

Mrs. Fabian: I'm going to model for you how I unpack sentences that have a lot of information in

them. (Points the sentence and reads it slowly.) Hmm. It seems like this sentence is mostly about a bee because the bee is doing some different things.

As Mrs. Fabian models unpacking the sentence through thinking aloud, she pulls shorter sentence strips from behind the original sentence and places them in the rows below, thereby visually "unpacking" the meaning of the sentence in front of the students. She reads each sentence as she places it in the pocket chart.

There's a forager bee.

The bee collects nectar.

The bee has pollen on its legs.

The bee carries the pollen to many flowers.

Mrs. Fabian: That's how I unpack all the ideas in the sentence, but really there are two big ideas. The first is that the bee is collecting nectar, and the second is that the bee is carrying pollen to the flowers. But these ideas are connected in a special way. There's a really important word in the sentence that's connecting the ideas. The word "as" at the beginning of the sentence tells me that the two ideas are happening at the same time.

Mrs. Fabian pulls out another sentence strip and places it under the sentences.

As = At the same time

She has the children read with her chorally the original sentence, the unpacked sentences, and the sentence with the word *as* on it. She models unpacking another sentence and follows the procedure of thinking aloud as she pulls the shorter sentences from the pocket chart.

While a worker bee crawls around an apple blossom, the bee is dusted with pollen.

There's a worker bee.

There's an apple blossom.

The bee crawls around an apple blossom.

There's pollen.

The bee gets pollen on its body.

The pollen is like dust.

Mrs. Fabian: Hmm. Here, it says that the bee is getting pollen on it and that it's like dust, but it doesn't tell us how the dust is getting on the bee. I think it must be on the flower, and when the bee's body rubs against the flower, it gets pollen on it because the pollen on it. The pollen is like dust (shows a picture of dust). Sometimes that's hard to figure out all the meanings in a sentence, but if you unpack the sentence, it's easier to understand the meanings in it. Let's read the original sentence and the unpacked sentences together.

Children: (Reading the sentences chorally.)

Mrs. Fabian: Did anyone notice that there's another special word at the beginning of the sentence that tells us *when* something is happening?

Carla: While?

Mrs. Fabian: Yes, the word "while" is like the word "as." It tells us that two or more things are happening at the same time. The words "while" and "as" are important for showing how the two ideas are connected.

Mrs. Fabian pulls out another sentence strip and places it below the others.

While = At the same time

Mrs. Fabian: Let's read the original sentence together again, and then see if you and your partner can tell me what two things are happening at the same time.

Mrs. Fabian guides her students in unpacking other sentences from the texts they're using in integrated ELA and science. Each sentence is a complex sentence containing the subordinate conjunctions "as" or "while." She writes each sentence on the chart paper, reads them with the students, and guides them to tell her what is happening in the sentence so that she can write the unpacked, or simpler sentences, the students tell her on the chart paper. During this process, there is a lot of discussion about the meaning of the original sentence, and she explicitly draws their attention to the way the two ideas are connected using the words "as" and "while."

Mrs. Fabian: When you connect your ideas using the words "while" and "as," it doesn't matter which idea you put first. For example, I can say, "While you watched me, I wrote a sentence." Or, I can say, "I wrote a sentence while you watched me." I can say, "While I washed the dishes, I sang a song." Or, I can say, "I sang a song, while I washed the dishes." We're going to play a little game connecting ideas.

She hands the children sets of pictures where two things are happening simultaneously (e.g., children are playing on a playground while their parents watch them, a bee sucking nectar from a flower while it collects pollen on its legs), and she writes the words "while" and "as" at the top of a piece of chart paper. She asks the students work in pairs and form sentences with two ideas connected with the word "while" or "as," and she listens to them as they combine their ideas so that she can correct any misunderstandings right away. After the children have constructed multiple sentences in partners, she asks them to tell her some of them, and she writes them on the "while" and "as" chart.

Mrs. Fabian: Who can tell me why we might want to use the words "while" or "as?"

Thao: They help us put two ideas together.

Mrs. Fabian: Yes, they do. Can you say more?

Thao: (Thinking.) They make the two ideas happen at the same time?

Mrs. Fabian: Yes, that's right. The words "while" and "as" let us know that two ideas are happening at the same time. Today we unpacked sentences to find out what all the meanings are, and we looked especially closely at how the words "while" and "as" are used to connect ideas. From now on, I want you to be good language detectives. A good language detective is always thinking about how to unpack sentences to understand the meaning better. And a good language detective is someone who is always thinking about how words are used to make meaning. Who thinks they can be a good language detective?

Children: (Chorally). Me!

Teacher Reflection and Next Steps:

During the rest of the day, Mrs. Fabian observes her EL children to see if they are using the new language resources she's teaching them in their speaking and writing. During designated ELD time for the rest of the science unit, Mrs. Fabian occasionally and at strategic times works with her students to unpack sentences in other science texts she is using, focusing on other aspects of the sentences that make them dense (e.g., long noun phrases, prepositional phrases). She uses a rubric based on the CA ELD Standards to see how individual students are progressing with their use of particular language resources (e.g., vocabulary, grammatical structures, text organization). She encourages them to use the new language by prompting them with questions like, *How can you combine those two ideas to show they're happening at the same time?* The children do not always produce perfect sentences, and Mrs. Fabian chooses her corrective feedback carefully since she knows that the children are experimenting with language, practicing the grammatical structures that they will continue to learn as the unit progresses.

Sources: Lesson adapted from Christie, 2005; Derewianka and Jones; 2012; and Schleppegrell 2009.

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Resources

Web sites:
- The Council of the Great City Schools provides a Classroom Example of Teaching Complex Text: Butterfly (http://vimeo.com/47315992).

Recommended reading:

Read this article at the Reading Rockets website to see a framework for students' information report writing development in the elementary grades:

Donovan, Carol A., and Laura B. Smolkin. 2011. "Supporting Informational Writing in the Elementary Grades." *The Reading Teacher* 64: 406–416. (http://www.readingrockets.org/article/52246).

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Conclusion

The information and ideas in this grade-level section are provided to guide teachers in their instructional planning. Recognizing California's richly diverse student population is critical for instructional and program planning and delivery. Teachers are responsible for educating a variety of learners, including **advanced learners**, **students with disabilities**, **ELs at different English language proficiency levels**, **Standard English learners**, and other **culturally and linguistically diverse learners**, as well as **students experiencing difficulties** with one or another of the themes presented in this chapter (meaning making, effective expression, language development, content knowledge, and foundational skills).

It is beyond the scope of a curriculum framework to provide guidance on meeting the learning needs of every student because each student comes to teachers with unique needs, histories, and circumstances. Teachers need to know their students well through appropriate assessment practices and other methods, including communication with families, in order to design effective instruction for them. They need to adapt and refine instruction as appropriate for individual learners. For example, a teacher might anticipate before a lesson is taught--or observe during a lesson--that a student or a group of students will need some additional or more intensive instruction in a particular area. Based on this evaluation of student needs, the teacher might provide individual or small group instruction, adapt the main lesson, or collaborate with a colleague. (See Figure 3.36.) Information about meeting the needs of diverse learners, scaffolding, and modifying or adapting instruction is provided in Chapters 2 and 9.

First grade children have flung open the doors of literacy and become newly powerful in navigating their way with words, sentences, books, and texts of all types.