Possible Sentences and KWL 2.0

What

Possible Sentences and KWL 2.0, from Reading Nonfiction by Kylene Beers and Bob Probst, are strategies which can be used separately, but pair well. Possible Sentences is a pre-reading strategy to help students engage with the content; KWL 2.0 is a way to use those sentences to help kids find relevance through a new way to use an old tool.

Why

While building prior knowledge as a pre-reading strategy can be an important aid to reading unfamiliar content, it can also serve to undermine both the growth mindset learning and satisfaction derived from puzzling things out, and the engagement that surprise can, and arguably should, spring from reading. Possible Sentences is a way to address prior knowledge while preserving, even building, anticipation about the reading. Similarly, in a KWL, after theoretically exhausting students’ prior knowledge for the K column, asking “What else do you want to know?” for the W column can be akin to beating the dead horse, dampening, rather than building, curiosity. KWL 2.0 seeks to extend the engagement started in Possible Sentences by providing a door to personal relevance by asking “What else do you want to know about this?”

How

Possible Sentences:

- Create a list of words or phrases (12-15) from the text to be read. Including words/phrases from all tiers of vocabulary provides for differentiation and a better supply of sentences.
- In pairs or independently, have students brainstorm 5 sentences each; each sentence should include between 3 and 6 of the words/phrases. If working in pairs, students need to record their own, or own versions, of the sentences brainstormed. Sentences need to be possible for a nonfiction text, and so cannot be nonsense sentences.
- Share sentences whole class; record sentences in a column labeled Possible Sentences, combining, revising, or adding sentences until all words have been used in at least one sentence and there is a representation of ideas and combinations on display.

At this point, you can

- Ask students to read the text and either verify or challenge the sentences.
- Record what they challenged or confirmed the sentences in a second column.

OR

- Transition to KWL 2.0 strategy (below) prior to reading the text.

KWL 2.0

- The column labeled Possible Sentences will serve as the (K) column; add at least two additional columns. Avoid traditional KWL headings to avoid groans from students and give the tool a fighting chance.
- For each sentence, ask “What else do you want to know about this?”; record in a second “Questions” column. If they struggle to come up with some, the Question Matrix may help.
- Have students read the text to verify/challenge the first column sentences and find answers to second column questions.
- Following reading, additional columns can be used to record any number of things: what challenged them; what was new; to note what was not said and needs further inquiry, etc.

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