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In early February, the 4th grade teacher that I do inclusion with was concerned with the DIBELS scores we just got back from the winter assessment. As we were both looking through the assessment booklets, we noticed that 19 out of the 24 students struggled with reading sight words incorrectly, including two students with learning disabilities and one student with a cognitive disability. Some of the words that were either deleted or read wrong included: and, the, once, there, what. We decided we wanted to work on reading passages more accurately and we want this practice to generalize into other subject areas.

We chose to use our Social Studies book to work on increasing our reading goals, while at the same time learning about the Gold Rush, since that was the next topic to be worked on in our Social Studies textbook. We used our common planning time to work on the lesson we wanted to incorporate. I, the special education teacher, was going to introduce the reading strategy we were going to use in the classroom, while the general education teacher was going to be teaching more about the Gold Rush.

First, Mr. Johnson is going to begin the Gold Rush unit by introducing the concept and vocabulary with them. After the introduction, I am going to introduce the PLAN-It, READ-it, RESPOND-to-it reading strategies that we are going to use when we read the first section of the chapter in our Social Studies books. We chose random groups of two to work together with and had them sit with each other. Then, I went through each step of the pre-reading strategies with the students. First, students were to look through their first section of the chapter and talk with each other about the following things:

* What is the author’s purpose?
* Preview the story and ask any questions.
* Activate and connect to prior knowledge.

Next, I introduced the during reading strategies that we were going to practice today. Students would take turns reading for two minutes each. The general education teacher starts the timer. When a student mispronounces a word, the other partner is going to be a supportive partner and tell them to try that sentence again. If the student doesn’t know the word, they can ask their partner for help. After the two minutes is up, the student spends one minute summarizing what they read about. Then, they swap positions and we keep doing this process until the first section is done. Both teachers walk around to the groups to make sure they understand what to do with each other and that they are paying attention and helping each other.

After the reading is done, they will complete a story map answering who, what, where, when, and why for this section. This story map will tell us if the students understood the section and if there are any items that the students didn’t understand. Then, we will have a class discussion of what was read and answer any questions the students have about the section. We will work on this process through the whole chapter and also include this process once a week in reading as well. I will be doing a DIBELS progress monitoring probe every other week to see if students are improving in accuracy and fluency.

* Read passage with 95% accuracy
* Read the passage with at least 110 wpm
* Write a 2 page research paper on the Gold Rush
* Read sight words, up to 3rd grade words, accurately
* Summarize the first section of the chapter using story map
* Gold Rush and explorers
* Read 4th grade sight words accurately
* Read 90% of multisyllabic words correctly
* Compare and contrast the explorers

This lesson went very well and I was ecstatically surprised with the outcome. As we were planning this lesson, I was worried about how students would do working together. The general education teacher was worried that they would be too concerned with the reading aspect of it that they wouldn’t learn what they were expected to learn when it came to the Social Studies content.

We haven’t done a lot of this tutor/tutee type of learning in this class and I thought it would be loud and hard to concentrate. I also thought that the students would be messing around and not focusing on the assignment. I was very impressed when I was walking around and most of the students were working really well together and they were helping each other out when there were words mispronounced.

I also noticed that when students were summarizing what they read, the other students would jump in and remind them of something else they read about if they didn’t include it in their brief summary. The students listened to each other and gave each other good feedback.

Filling out the story map after reading also went really well. The students were engaged in filling it out with each other and were taking turns writing things down. The group that had the student with the cognitive impairment worked well with him and helped him out and made him feel comfortable in the group.

The lesson went so well that it actually took longer than we expected it would because the students were enjoying the strategies and the lesson that was incorporated within it. There was a lot of discussion about the Gold Rush and students were talking with each other about it. At one point in the lesson, I saw one group ask another group a question and the four of them were discussing the question and sharing what they thought.

The only problem that we encountered was one group did not get along as expected. I ended up sitting with them and working with them while the general education teacher walked around to all the other groups. They were fine once I joined their group and started working together. Once it was time for the story map, I even got up and walked to other groups because they were starting to work together well. They finished the story map together, taking turns writing and discussing what they read about the Gold Rush.

I liked incorporating some reading strategies into the Social Studies lesson. The concern from the general education teacher about students focusing too much on the reading strategy and not learning enough about the Gold Rush was dismissed after this lesson was done. There was a lot of discussion about the Gold Rush.

Students learned about the Gold Rush and also worked on their reading skills as well. We used these strategies because we want to generalize these strategies to all subjects. We also want to use cooperative learning to help make Social Studies learning fun!

I also think this lesson was important because students need to realize that reading is important – in all subjects and aspects of life. I think students learned more from this lesson because they helped each other learn about the Gold Rush and had discussions with each other and with the classroom at the end of the lesson.

One of the strengths I saw from this lesson was that teamwork was included in this cooperative learning lesson. Also, there was time for any questions they had at the end of the lesson and there were some good questions that the partners came up with. We had a very promising discussion with each other and students were actively involved.

I have done two progress monitoring probes since we started using these reading strategies. Out of the 24 students in the classroom, there has been an increase in the correct reading of words per minute with 21 of the students. That means that it is working well with all of the students except three, so we need to do some more digging with those three students to see what we could do to help them learn more and become better readers.

One limitation I see with this lesson is that I don’t think this would be a good lesson to use all the time while teaching Social Studies. I think some higher knowledge topics would take a movie or a lecture to help learn the topic. I also think the interest level for this strategy might eventually decline throughout the year. Students were so excited about doing this lesson the first time we did it, and I think they may enjoy switching partners and doing it again. I have done this strategy before, and I know that eventually, students don’t discuss things as much or help each other as the tutor/tutee throughout the year.