

**Teaching Testing as a Genre**

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& Classroom Literacy Conference  
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**Common Assumptions**

- We want to raise our test scores
- We agree that we don't want to do it at the expense of good teaching
- We have a limited amount of time

HOW CAN WE?

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**Resources:**

- **Test Talk** by Greene & Melton
- **Put Thinking to the Test**  
by Lori Conrad

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### Why should they pass it?

(Annandale Terrace Elementary, Fairfax VA)

- Not just because of state and federal pressures
- Testing is a life skill
- Successful test takers have an advantage
- Much of their academic & professional success throughout life would be based upon their performance on tests

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### What does it take to do well on a test?

Four categories:

- Dispositions (attitudes of the mind)
- Content
- Format
- Procedures

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### How/When do we address each...

Content: All year long

Format: Through inquiry study

Dispositions: How can we support the dispositions in our current framework?

stamina      perseverance

Procedures: Practice packets, specific lessons and discussions.

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## Why Testing as a genre?

If we think about the test as a sort of genre, bizarre though it is, we could teach kids how to negotiate it in much the same way that we teach them how to negotiate any other genre...

(Test Talk)

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**Our goal was not to have the kids practice the test over and over again, which we knew tended to reinforce ineffective test-taking strategies. Instead, we imagined a test sophistication study in which they would explore the unique qualities of this genre.**

(Test Talk)

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## What is an inquiry study?

- A study carefully planned by the teacher, often lead by a question posed by the teacher or the students and investigated by the students.
- A testing genre inquiry study would provide an anchor for students to hang future test talk lessons onto...to link back to.
- How is this different than 30 minutes of content test prep on Fridays?

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**What is true about a reading test that is different than the reading we usually do:** (Donna's class list)

- It's all in black and white.
- There are questions.
- It sometimes says STOP.
- It says TEST.
- They almost always ask you the main idea.
- There are about 5-15 questions that go with each story.
- There are more than one story on a test.
- There's fiction, nonfiction, poetry, facts
- Some stories are longer
- Sometimes they want you to think about the words

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**continued**

- Questions about index and glossary
- There are charts
- They sometimes ask you to take a picture in your mind in order to the question
- They organized into different parts.
- Some question are not fair because they asked me things I haven't studied before.
- You have to have a lot of thinking.
- There are some facts in the text.
- Most of the words are interesting.
- The stories on the test are sometimes not as interesting.
- the multiple choice questions have 4 possible answers.

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**What kinds of questions go with fiction stories?** (Donna's class list)

- Predict
- Most important part
- Right there
- Word meaning
- Phrase meaning
- Character trait cause and effect
- Theme
- Problem and solution
- Finding evidence

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**What kinds of questions go with informational pieces?**

- At your tables, look through the test samples. What are they asking? Find and list the key words or phrases from each question.

**Break**

Share insights

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**Notice the overlaps**

- What are the overlaps between the fiction and information lists?

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**After the Inquiry...What next**

- A testing genre inquiry would provide an anchor for students to hang their future test talk lessons onto...to link back to.
- If this is going to be different than the 30 minute Friday test prep lessons that we sometimes do...we have to naturally and deliberately weave test talk into our workshop?

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## Resource book talks

- Exploration packet of sample lessons from each resource.
- At your tables—browse your packet and plan how you might use the lessons.

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