

Can the ACLEC Strategy help to improve students' elaboration in informational writing?

Objectives:

- Participants will learn the ACLEC strategy.
- Reading for evidence and elaboration
- Socratic Seminar discussing the decline of the Maya

Standards:

- 6-8.WH.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
- 6-8.WH.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research
- 6-8.RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources
- 6-8.WH.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question.
- 6.21 Clarify key aspects of an event, issue or problem through inquiry and research.
- 6.1 Determine and explain the historical context of the Incan, Maya and Aztec civilizations and major European explorers and colonizers as well as the Columbian Exchange.

Background:

As a Social Studies teacher, I wanted to help improve my students' informational writing skills. I chose to use my unit about the Maya as a jumping off point for teaching the ACLEC strategy. I had used it in my Language Arts class and wanted to keep consistency between the different subjects when it came to writing informational texts. The class was given a variety of articles describing theories for the decline of the Mayan civilization. The students were instructed to read at least two of the articles. We then held a Socratic Seminar in order to expose students to all of the theories. Students were then given a class period to write a paragraph that established which theory they thought was best. They needed to provide two pieces of evidence and elaborate on their citations. I found that some students were successful in being able to do this, but others seemed to get stuck on the elaboration piece. I wonder if the ACLEC formula is too complicated for them to understand and follow along at the sixth grade level.

Lesson:

This lesson will familiarize the group with the ACLEC strategy. I will teach it by modeling and provide time for practice using the Mayan Theory articles. I will allow time for the group to write their paragraphs with two pieces of evidence and elaboration.

- I will give a brief explanation of the ACLEC strategy and how it is used in Language Arts classes in the school. I will model how I use it in my classroom. The participants will follow my modeling and do their own ACLEC Notes in their writer's notebooks.

- I will give background information on the Mayan civilization and introduce the standards for my Social Studies class. We will watch a short video that gives introduces the essential question that needs to be answered in their paragraph: Explain why the Mayan civilization declined.

- Participants will receive two of the four possible theories that explain why the Mayan civilization declined. Participants will use AVID reading strategies and ACLEC notes to find the answer to the essential question.

- I will explain the "Wingmen" Socratic Seminar, which discusses possible theories for the decline of the Maya.

- Participants will decide which theory they agree with the most and create their assertion. The participants will then write a paragraph citing evidence and using elaboration to explain why the Mayan civilization declined.