

PARENT TEACHING TIPS

... on Your Children and Textbook Patterns of Learning

By Bill Welker, EdD

This Sunday I want to talk about the various textbook organizational patterns. You would be wise to carefully read the following and share this information with your children.

Imagine you must learn how to drive a car with a stick shift. There is nobody to assist you, and you have no idea where to begin. Do you turn the motor on before or after the car is in gear? Do you press down on the gas pedal before, during or after you release the clutch? When do you shift to a higher gear? In essence, what should you do first, second, third, etc.?

In reality, you are faced with a “sequencing” dilemma. Likewise, students are confronted with similar problems when reading their textbooks in school.

Educational authors follow some organizational pattern when they write their subject-area textbooks. Moreover, these authors often use a combination of organizational patterns as they develop textbook chapters. And take note, students who have an understanding of textbook organizational patterns tend to better comprehend what they read.

Experts in reading, who analyze textbooks, have discovered what they believe to be the four most common organizational patterns used in textbooks: time order, simple listing, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect. These patterns are thoroughly explained below:

Time Order

This organizational pattern places events into proper sequential order. Some

signal words are: on (date), not long after, now, before, then, when, etc.

Example 1

On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Then Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in the next president of the United States.

(social studies)

Example 2

In Jack London's novel, "*The Call of the Wild*," Buck expected to be the lead dog after defeating Spitz. (literature)

Simple Listing

This organizational pattern presents facts one after another, but unlike time order, their order of presentation is not important or needed. Some signal words are: to begin with, first, second, next, finally, etc.

Example 1

To begin with, the four basic parts of speech are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. (language arts)

Example 2

Finally, the four seasons of the year are fall, spring, winter, and summer.

(science)

Comparison/Contrast

This organization pattern shows likenesses and differences between two or more ideas or events. Some signal words are however, but, as well as, on the other hand, not only...but also, either...or, while, although, similarly, likewise, etc.

Example 1

Inter-city elementary schools consider property destruction and fighting as their major disciplinary problems; on the other hand, rural elementary schools view throwing paper on the floor and chewing gum as their major disciplinary problems.

(sociology)

Example 2

Simply stated, dividing whole numbers makes them smaller. However, multiplying makes them larger. (mathematics)

Cause/Effect

This textbook pattern of organization demonstrates how one event or happening leads to another event or happening. Some signal words are because, since, therefore, so that, consequently, as a result, this led to, nevertheless, accordingly, due to, if...then, etc.

Example 1

Because of a widespread epidemic of obesity in our American children, schools have offered more nutritionally-beneficial lunches, the students are being taught what foods are best for them, instead of eating unhealthy snacks, and exposed to exercise programs they can perform at school during gym class and in the home environment. (health and physical education)

Example 2

Due to thousands of years of erosion by rushing water, the Grand Canyon was formed. (natural science)

In closing, did you know that approximately 80-percent of our high school graduates who enter college have absolutely no awareness of textbook organizational patterns? Well, my readers, it's true.

Parents, if you teach your children about textbook organizational patterns, they will not only learn better, but they will also retain (or remember) what they read.

Furthermore, they can use their understanding of patterns of organization to improve their writing, speaking, and listening skills.

That's a bargain at any price.

Parent Proverb

“The way to avoid road blocks to learning is to ask questions.”

- Joseph J. Thomas

Next Month's Column: “Your children and Types of Tests in School”

(Editor's Note: Dr. Bill Welker is a retired reading specialist who was a K-12 classroom teacher for 40 years. He received the “Teacher of the Year” award by the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce. His e-mail is mattalkwv@hotmail.com.)

