Designated ELD Vignette

Vignette 6.1 illustrates good teaching for all students with particular attention to the learning needs of ELs. In addition to good first teaching, EL students benefit from intentional and purposeful designated ELD instruction that builds into and from content instruction and focuses on their particular language learning needs. Vignette 6.2 illustrates how designated ELD can build from and into the types of lessons outlined in the first vignette. It also illustrates how teachers can show their students ways to develop awareness of the language resources in complex texts.

Vignette 6.2 Designated ELD Instruction in Grade Six Using Language Analysis to Deepen Understandings of Complex Text

Background:

      Ms. Valenti's sixth grade class of 35 students includes five English learners at the Expanding level of English language proficiency, four who have been in U.S. schools for at least four years and one who arrived to the U.S. a little over a year ago. There are a small number (three to five) of EL students in each sixth grade class, and each of the sixth grade teachers teach their own students designated ELD in small groups, working collaboratively as a team to design lessons and adapt them to students' English language proficiency levels and particular learning styles and needs.

Lesson Context:

      The sixth graders in the school have just started reading the memoir "The Making of a Scientist" by Richard Feynman (see the ELA/Integrated ELD Vignette above). Their designated ELD lessons for the next several days are designed to support and enhance their EL students' understandings of the text and their ability to convey their understandings in speaking and writing. In planning these lessons, the teachers notice that the memoir is organized in a way that may not be immediately apparent to their EL students, and Feynman also uses language that may not be familiar to them. They plan to focus their lessons on these areas in ways that attend to the particular needs of EL students at different English language proficiency levels.

      After the first reading of the text "The Making of a Scientist," Ms. Valenti invites her five EL students to the teaching table while the rest of the class engages in collaborative tasks they are accustomed to doing independently (e.g., writing e-mails to their pen pals in Vietnam and El Salvador or conducting searches for research projects at the *Internet café* station, observing objects through microscopes and then drawing and writing descriptions about them at the *science lab* station). The EL students bring their copies of the text, "The Making of a Scientist," as well as the focus questions handout with their notes. The learning target and focus standards in Ms. Valenti's lesson plan is provided below:

> **Learning Target:** Students will analyze the language of a familiar complex text to understand how it's organized and how particular language resources are used to convey meanings.

> **CA ELD Standards (Expanding):** *ELD.PI.6.1 – Contribute to class, group, and partner discussions by following turn-taking rules, asking relevant questions, affirming others, adding relevant information, and paraphrasing key ideas; ELD.PI.6.7 – Explain how well writers and speakers use specific language to present ideas or support*

arguments and provide detailed evidence (e.g., showing the clarity of the phrasing used to present an argument) with moderate support; ELD.PII.6.1 – Apply growing understanding of how different text types are organized to express ideas (e.g., how a narrative is organized sequentially with predictable stages versus how arguments are structured logically around reasons and evidence) to comprehending texts and writing texts with increasing cohesion; ELD.PII.6.2a – Apply growing understanding of language resources for referring the reader back or forward in text (e.g., how pronouns or synonyms refer back to nouns in text) to comprehending texts and writing texts with increasing cohesion.

Lesson Excerpts:

First, Ms. Valenti explains that they'll be looking closely at the language Feynman chose to use to express his ideas and how he organized this language to produce a whole text that is both a pleasure to read and interesting to discuss and learn from. She tells them that this *language analysis* will help them to read texts more closely and will also give them ideas about the types of language resources they can select to use in their own speaking and writing. In order to contextualize the language analysis in the bigger goal of making meaning from the text, she asks the students to briefly review their notes from the previous ELA lesson and then share what they thought about the memoir.

Tatiana shares that she liked the way that, rather than merely stating that his father taught him life lessons or principles, Feynman gave examples of how his father made the principles real to him as a child. Sergio shares that he enjoyed discussing the text with others but that, even though some of the language was clarified in the small and whole group discussions, there are still some words and phrases he doesn't quite understand. The other students concur. Ms. Valenti has anticipated this, and she asks them to each select three words from the text that they still don't know as well as they'd like and feel are important to know. She charts the words they've selected and briefly explains their meaning (the words will be added to the class's academic word wall later so the students can reference them in their speaking and writing).

Next, Ms. Valenti facilitates a discussion about the text organization and structure of Feynman's memoir.

Ms. Valenti: Lately, we've been talking a lot about how different types of texts are structured. For example, a couple of weeks ago, we looked at how short stories are usually organized. Would anyone like to briefly remind us of what we learned about how stories are organized?

One student shares that the typical stages of a story are *orientation*, *complication*, and *resolution*, and other students add to the overall structure by sharing what typically happens in each stage. They also share that a story is structured sequentially. In other words, events are presented in order by time.

Ms. Valenti: It sounds like you really understand how a story is structured. A memoir, which is the type of text we read this morning, is structured in similar ways to a story because the author is telling the story of his or her life. So, *usually*, events will be presented sequentially, too. But there are differences. Usually, a memoir will have an orientation—where we find out things like who and where—and then there's a sequence of events, but not necessarily a complication, like a story. And at the end, there's an evaluation, meaning, the author tells you why the events and details they've shared were important or the impact of these events on the author's life. We're going to take a look at where these stages are in "The Making of a Scientist," and we're also going to look at some of the language Feynman uses to show when things are happening.

As she explains the stages of a memoir, Ms. Valenti writes the words *orientation*, *events*, and *evaluation* on the small whiteboard at the table with space below each word. She asks the students to take one minute to look at their copy of the memoir and to see if they can identify these big stages. She tells them not to try to re-read every sentence (they've already read the text twice, and chunks of the text multiple times) but rather, to skim it as they look for the stages and use their pencils to note where they are. Then, she facilitates a discussion about what the students have found.

Azizi:	I noticed that he's telling, it's like he's telling little stories inside the memory.
Ms. Valenti:	Can you say more about that? What do you mean by "little stories?"
Azizi:	Well, here (pointing to where he's marked his text), he's telling a story about the dominoes, how his father taught him about mathematics with the dominoes. And here, he's telling a story about the dinosaurs and the encyclopedia, and then later he's telling a story about the birds.
Tatiana:	I have something to add on to what Azizi is saying.
Ms. Valenti:	What did you notice, Tatiana?
Tatiana:	I noticed that same thing that Azizi is saying, and I also noticed that when he tells the stories, he says something more about the story.
Sergio:	Yeah, he …
Ms. Valenti:	Just a moment Sergio. I don't think Tatiana was finished.
Tatiana:	Here (pointing to her text), it says "But I learned from my father to translate: everything I read I try to figure out what it really means, what it's really saying." First he tells the little stories, and then he tells what his father was teaching him.
Ms. Valenti:	Did anyone else notice that about the events, or the little stories of his life?
Sergio:	I agree with Tatiana, and I want to add that I noticed that the stories – the events, I mean - are in order. First, he's a baby – no! – (looking at his text) it starts before he's born, and then he's a baby, and then he's a kid.
Ana:	I think the orientation is not long. I think the first sentence is the orientation only.
Ms. Valenti:	And why do you think that, Ana?
Ana:	In the first sentence, he tells us who is going to be in the story, I mean … What's it called again?
Sergio:	The *memoir*.
Ana:	Yeah, he tells us who is going to be in the *memoir*—his father, his mother, him—and his father tells his mother, "If it's a boy, he's going to be a scientist." I think he's telling us what the story is going to be about. But I don't like that. Girls can be scientists, too.
Ms. Valenti:	You are so right, Ana. Girls can be scientists, and there are many famous scientists who are women. I think the reason Feynman wrote that is because, at the time, not a lot of women were scientists. Things were different back then, and women did not have as many chances to be scientists, or lawyers, or even the President of the United States. You all are noticing a lot of things in this text. That's really great thinking. Let's take a moment so I can catch up with you and write some of these details down so we don't forget them.

Ms. Valenti charts what the students have said on the whiteboard under the first two stages (orientation and events). She invites the students who haven't yet shared their ideas to suggest what she should write for the evaluation stage, and they note that, at the end of the memoir, in the last two paragraphs, Feynman tells the reader how his father taught him and what that meant for his career choices.

Ms. Valenti:	Okay, we've established the overall stages of the text and that it's written mostly sequentially, or in order. That's something that's the same as the way stories—like the ones we read before—are structured. We've also seen that after each little story—or event—the author tells us what that lesson his father was teaching him. That's something that's different from regular stories, right? Now, we're going to analyze the language a little closer. This time, when we look at the text, I want you to hunt for words and phrases that let us know when things are happening. For example, at the very beginning, the first several words tell us when things are happening: "Before I was

born …" By choosing to use those words, Feynman helps us know where in time we are. So, with a partner, go through and talk about any words or phrases that you think tell the reader when things are happening. Then, go ahead and highlight those words and phrases.

The partners spend a couple of minutes searching for the words and phrases. Since there are five students at the table, Ms. Valenti is Raúl's partner. Lately, she's noticed that Raúl has been agitated in class. When she asked him if anything was wrong, he told her his uncle had recently died in a car accident. Accordingly, Ms. Valenti has been making a special effort to make Raúl feel connected to her (e.g., checking in frequently with him during the day, letting him know that she genuinely cares about him). They briefly scan first paragraph of the text together, and then Ms. Valenti asks Raúl if he sees any words or phrases that lets them know when the event is happening.

Raúl: I think … Here, it says he was a little kid, "When I was just a little kid." That's telling that it's later—after he was a baby.

Ms.   Valenti: Let's read that sentence again. (They read the sentence together.)

Raúl: Oh! He's a baby here, I think, because he's in the highchair, so he has to be a baby. So it's … It happens after the start, *after* the orientation because there it says "Before I was born." This is the first story, when he's a baby.

Ms. Valenti: And how does Feynman let us know that?

Raúl: Cuz he's saying things like, before this, when that, then later on he says (searching in the text) "When I was a small boy …"

Ms.   Valenti: Yes, so Feynman is helping the reader along by telling us when in time we are: before he was born, when he was a baby, when he was a small boy, and so on.

When Ms. Valenti debriefs with the group, the partners share that they found other language resources the author used to sequence the events and tell when things happened in time. For example, at one point, Feynman uses the term "We used to go," and Ms. Valenti points out that this phrase lets the reader know that it happened a long time ago, but that it happened often. Tatiana points out that another way the memoir is similar to a story is that the verbs are in the past tense (they had previously noted this when they analyzed the language of stories).

Ms. Valenti concludes the lesson by asking the students to be on the lookout for the ways the stories or memoirs or other text types are structured and the way the authors use language differently. She tells them that paying attention to these things will help them to be better readers and writers.

Next Steps:

During ELA with the whole class the next day, Ms. Valenti facilitates a similar discussion about how Feynman's memoir is structured, delving deeper into the language resources he used and the ways in which he constructed his paragraphs and sentences, not to mention the sections with dialogue. During designated ELD, Ms. Valenti uses the CA ELD Standards as a guide to help her focus more intensively on the language learning needs of her ELs and to target the challenging language in the texts students are reading during ELA and other content areas so that they can better comprehend them.

Resources:

To read more about engaging students in discussions about language and how it makes meaning, see:

Gibbons, Pauline. 2008. "'It Was Taught Good and I Learned a Lot': Intellectual Practices and ESL Learners in the Middle Years." *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 31 (2): 155–173.

Schleppegrell, Mary J. 2013. "Language and Meaning in Complex Texts." *Perspectives on Language and Literacy,* Summer: 37-40.

Figure 6.15. Collaboration

Collaboration: A Necessity

Frequent and meaningful collaboration with colleagues and parents/families is critical for ensuring that all students meet the expectations of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards. Teachers are at their best when they regularly collaborate with their teaching colleagues to plan instruction, analyze student work, discuss student progress, integrate new learning into their practice, and refine lessons or identify interventions when students experience difficulties. Students are at their best when teachers enlist their collaboration and that of parents and families as partners in their student's education. Schools are at their best when educators are supported by administrators and other support staff to implement the type of instruction called for in this framework. School districts are at their best when teachers across the district have an expanded professional learning community they can rely upon as thoughtful partners and for tangible instructional resources. More information about these types of collaboration can be found in Chapter 11 and throughout this framework.