

Rigor and Talk: Nonfiction

Students and Dispositions

- Students are curious, as shown by comments such as “Tell me more . . .” and “Show me how . . .” and “What if we did this. . . .”
- Students are reflective, as shown by comments such as “To me, this means . . .” and “As I understand what you’re saying . . .” and “After thinking about this some more . . .” and “When I reconsider. . . .”
- Students tolerate ambiguity, letting multiple ideas or positions exist side by side while evidence is being presented or sorted.
- Students are patient, giving ideas and others a chance to grow.
- Students are tentative, meaning they *offer* rather than *assert*, are open-minded rather than narrow-minded, are more interested in questions that are to be explored than in questions that are to be answered.
- Students show a willingness to rethink ideas, sometimes changing their minds, as shown by comments such as, “After reading this, I now think. . . .” and “This section caused me to rethink. . . .”

Students and Texts

- Students use texts to expand, deepen, clarify, challenge, and change their own knowledge.
- Students avoid the assumption that a nonfiction text is true and accurate.
- Students use evidence from one or more texts to back up or refute author’s claims.
- Students use evidence from one or more texts to back up their claims.
- Students refer to and quote from texts when appropriate.
- Students make connections within and across texts.
- Students refer to what was learned in previously read texts.

Students and Ideas

- Students change their minds about ideas when warranted.
- Students hypothesize.
- Students are able to consider alternative positions and are willing to ask “What if?”
- Students identify topics that they need to know more about before reaching conclusions.

Students and Reasoning and Evidence

- Students provide evidence for their statements and opinions, and they respect and are willing to be persuaded by substantial evidence and reasoning a text or another reader presents.
- Students present information in some sort of logical order—causes and effects, sequential, lists of reasons or examples.
- Students avoid “just because” statements and similar expressions that indicate disregard for reason and evidence.
- Students recognize faulty assumptions and encourage each other to examine those assumptions.
- Students recognize persuasive techniques.
- Students question the author’s motives/claims/biases/assumptions when appropriate to do so.

Students and Vocabulary

- Students use language that shows they understand the vocabulary specific to the topic under discussion.
- Students ask for clarification of words they do not understand.