Strategies For Social Studies
Chapter Twelve

Do It: A Strategy for Synthesizing Information

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Introduction

This strategy was designed to compartmentalize a step in another strategy that guides the students in the process of writing Document Based Essay Questions. The Global History and Geography teachers in the Iroquois Central School District have developed an acronym that aids the student in the construction of Document Based Questions. The acronym is entitled, READ TO DO my ESSAY. In the process of completing the acronym, the teachers have identified a significant problem students are experiencing in the construction of the DBQs. Students are not adequately synthesizing the information provided to them in the documents, with relevant outside information from sources other than the documents. In order to address the problem, we have devised a strategy that will have the students isolate theoutside information separate from the information given in the documents. The information will then be matched by category, allowing the students to more easily identify how the information can be synthesized.

We will have the opportunity to develop this strategy in an after school program designed to target at-risk writers.

Step 1: Identifying the Strategy

The goal of this lesson is to assist students in synthesizing information from the documents provided in a DBQ Essay with outside information they gather or possess. Students often base their essays exclusively on information garnered from the documents without bringing in relevant outside information.
This strategy will assist students in identifying and categorizing the outside information and finally synthesizing the two sets of information.

The strategy is called “Do It”. It consists of a T-Outline with document information on the left side and relevant outside information on the right side.

**Step 2: Modeling the Strategy**

The teacher presents an essay question to the students (Comparing and Contrasting the political systems of ancient Greece.) Two documents relating to the political systems (Pericles’ “Funeral Oration” and “The Life of Lycurgus”) are introduced to the students. The T-Outline is also presented at this time in the form of a handout. The teacher reads one document at a time and identifies whether it is a primary or secondary source and then paraphrases the document on the left side of the T-Outline. This process is repeated for the second document.

The teacher next assists the students in identifying relevant outside information that may come from class notes and/or the student textbook. This outside information is listed on the right side of the T-Outline.

The teacher then needs to help the students identify the task required for the final essay. In this example it would be the need to recognize similarities and differences of the political systems of ancient Greece.

The final step in the modeling process is to guide the students in identifying how the information on each side of the T-Outline connects together. A sample paragraph written by the teacher could be used to demonstrate this process. Students should then practice this synthesis in groups or individually.

**Do It**

**T - Outline**

**Topic:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Outside Information</th>
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Step 3: Scaffolding the Strategy

After the group practice, the teacher gives the students a complete DBQ consisting of 6 – 8 documents and an essay question. At this point student attention should be directed to the final essay question in order to identify the task required. The students are given a T-Outline and specific materials to be read on the topic (textbook, other primary and secondary materials). The students need to fill out the right side of the T-Outline prior to the next class meeting.

At the beginning of the next class, the students are given time to compare their notes with other students’ findings. Student attention should then be directed to the documents in the DBQ as they begin to identify and paraphrase the documents on the left side of the T-Outline. Upon completion of this step, the students should begin to identify how the outside information on the right side of the T-Outline connects with the document information on the left side of the T-Outline. The teacher circulates around the room checking on student progress and providing feedback to the students on the synthesis process.

Step 4: Providing Additional Practice

A suggested methodology is to begin the year utilizing this strategy with each DBQ assigned. Students should work toward proficiency, which will allow them to gradually eliminate the T-Outline.

Conclusion

Paraphrasing the documents, identifying relevant outside information, and organizing this information in a T-Outline, enables the student to connect multiple pieces of information together in a logical manner.

Suggestions for Adapting the Strategy in other Grades or Content Areas

The incorporation of this strategy across the curriculum would correspond well with the writing acronym created by the Social Studies Department at Iroquois Central School, READ TO DO my WRITING.

Thinksheet

Copy is attached.
Thinksheet

Do It
T-Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
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<table>
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