NOTE TAKING AND BEYOND, 
THE GO METHOD: 
A Strategy for Classifying Information

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Introduction

I am a Social Studies teacher in a 6-8 grade middle school. I have found that students in middle school are usually beginning to become independent learners. As such, this is usually a time of overwhelming adaptation for students. Upon completion of middle school, they are expected to be self-motivated and productive individuals. The following strategies may be used to facilitate the metamorphosis from dependent to independent learner. The strategy outlined below is called the GO method. GO is an acronym that stands for get organized.

Step 1: Identifying the Strategy

Students frequently copy notes from a blackboard, without any cohesion. Many times, this leads to a lack of fundamental understanding of the content. Perhaps, students can begin to synthesize the content by immediately organizing the information in a structured manner. This strategy involves layering learning, using multiple graphic organizers. The strategy begins with a simple organizer to assist student classification of information during or following the note-taking process. Next, the student proceeds with another, more complex organizer, a triple Venn diagram, which leads to application and synthesis of the knowledge. Upon mastery of the GO process the student will be ready to write a quality essay from the data provided by the instructor.
Step 2: Modeling the Strategy

Since this strategy involves three types of organizers, a two or three column T-chart, a double Venn diagram, and a triple Venn diagram, there must be three separate occasions of modeling. It is my belief that skills should be simple, non-course related content and practiced as such until mastery. Upon mastery, content should be added, followed by independent application of knowledge and skill combined.

The two or three column chart may be modeled simply by the teacher. This is the least complex of the strategies in the GO method, and students are usually familiar with the process of using an organizer such as this.

The double Venn diagram, on the other hand, is a bit more complex; hence mastery of this strategy will take some practice. I recommend that a large group practice be done comparing cats to dogs. The unique qualities of each are placed in the appropriate circle, and the shared qualities placed in the middle. Next, students must have independent practice. This can easily accomplished by comparing himself or herself to another student given a set of questions.

The triple Venn diagram is quite challenging and can be used in multifarious situations. To model the strategy, I suggest that the circles first be shaded lightly, as to facilitate complete comprehension of where each circle overlaps another. (This coloring in can be observed on page of this chapter) Next, the teacher should demonstrate the strategy using an overhead projector. This will be sufficient modeling, in most instances, as students will transfer their skill knowledge from the double Venn.

The thinksheets are attached in order to facilitate this process. The teacher should begin with Addendum A and finish with Addendum C.

Step 3: Scaffolding the Strategy

A. Addendum A is a simple T-Chart. A T-chart is perhaps the easiest of all the strategies on which students classify information. One may use the three-column or two-column chart depending upon the objective of the instructor. Modeling this type of thinking strategy may be achieved by the instructor simply “doing” the first two classifications for each column in a large group setting. Addendum A may also be modified to be a two-lined table if appropriate.

B. Addendum B is the next step in our scaffolding progression. It is imperative that students fully master the skills of using a double Venn diagram, as Addendum C cannot be completed without this knowledge.
Therefore, the skills needed to use a double Venn diagram will be mastered using non-content, so the student may focus solely on the skill. One may have students compare cats to dogs. Qualities unique to each would be placed in the outer circles, whereas shared qualities are placed in the middle circle. This is a simple assignment, which allows the student to practice the skill. As always, the instructor will model the outcome by demonstrating her own comparisons for the large group using the Venn diagram. The modeling must be preceded by guided practice, and then independent practice. In the GO method, Addendum B is merely a stepping-stone for Addendum C. However, one may utilize Addendum B as the destination, rather than continue to the more complex sheet 3.

C. Addendum C is the final step in the GO method. Addendum C is a triple Venn diagram. To model the process of using a triple Venn diagram to compare data, one may demonstrate the shade in method. As I stated previously, each circle is lightly shaded in a different color. This provides the boundaries for students to enter their information when comparing one, two, and three things and documenting their similarities. This shading—method is critical for students to perceive the area of each entry in the triple Venn diagram. Once students have demonstrated understanding of the workings of a triple Venn diagram, they are ready to transfer information to this sheet. Upon mastery of the strategy, students may skip the first two Thinksheets (Addendum A and B), and delve immediately into the third Thinksheet (Addendum C). An example of this is provided in the chapter.

Step 4: Providing Additional Practice

Additional practice may be provided in an unending variety of assignments depending upon the instructor’s objectives, learning goals, and content. Examples of this may be: comparing automobiles, wars, angles, equations, Presidents, animals, planets, elements, poets, artists, time periods, cities, nouns, websites, computer programs, movies, etc. Any of these examples may be modified to fit the content and grade level of the learner.

Student Examples

In the example provided, students were asked to describe the political, economic, and social situations in each of 13 United States colonies. The colonies were grouped as New England, Middle, and Southern to provide for
cohesion. (Please refer to the attached examples of student work) As this student had previously used the GO method, she was comfortable enough to go directly to the triple Venn and bypass step one and two. Although abbreviated, it is evident that the student has analyzed the notes and classified them using a strategy that will enable her to write a quality comparative essay.

Conclusion

As evidenced by the student work provided, the GO method provides the student with a plethora of opportunities to recall, classify, synthesize, apply and construct knowledge. Each organizer depends upon the previous, and each objective scaffolds from the preceding one. As students become masters of these strategies, the strategies will become another option to use when writing, without being promoted to do so by their instructor. These strategies will become habit for the student, and will increase their ability to write a quality paper or essay.

Thinksheets

Copies are attached. (Addendums A, B, C, D)

Student Example

Copy is attached.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Column Chart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thinksheet (Addendum B)

Venn Diagram

Idea 1
Unique attributes:

Common
Idea 1 and
Idea 2
attributes

Idea 2
Unique attributes:
Thinksheet (Addendum C)

Triple Venn Diagram
Thinksheet (Addendum D)

Example of colored Venn

KEY:
Yellow - Qualities unique to the subject.
Red - Qualities shared by the other two colors it touches.
Purple - Qualities unique to the subject.
Blue - Qualities unique to the subject.
Green - Qualities shared by all three.
This is an example of a student-completed Venn diagram. The student created the Venn diagram from her notes on the 13 colonies. She grouped each of the colonies into one of the three geographic regions, and placed the economic, political, and social information in the appropriate section of the thinksheet. The orange colored writing reflects those characteristics unique to the New England colonies. The burgundy writing specifies qualities unique to the Southern colonies. Black writing designates information reserved to the Middle Colonies. Blue font indicates characteristics shared by the two groups whose circles overlap, and red indicates qualities shared by all three.