

RAFT

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Time Frame 50-60 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- How does the RAFT instructional strategy lead to authentic learning in a classroom environment?
- How is authenticity supported when using the RAFT instructional strategy?

Summary

This professional development session will showcase the use of the RAFT (role, audience, format, and topic) instructional strategy. The RAFT strategy supports the components of authenticity, deepening content knowledge and construction of knowledge (higher-order thinking).

Learning Goals

- Participants will identify how the RAFT strategy can be used as a tool to support literacy in all content areas.
- Participants will learn how to construct a RAFT.
- Participants will identify how using the RAFT strategy supports the components of authenticity.

Attachments

- Authentic Learning and Teaching—RAFT.pdf
- Instructional Strategy Note Sheet—RAFT.docx
- Instructional Strategy Note Sheet—RAFT.pdf
- Presentation Slides—RAFT.pptx
- RAFT Template—RAFT.docx
- RAFT Template—RAFT.pdf
- RAFT for ELA—RAFT.docx
- RAFT for ELA—RAFT.pdf
- RAFT for MATH—RAFT.docx
- RAFT for MATH—RAFT.pdf
- RAFT for SCIENCE—RAFT.docx
- RAFT for SCIENCE—RAFT.pdf
- RAFT for SOCIAL STUDIES—RAFT.docx
- RAFT for SOCIAL STUDIES—RAFT.pdf
- Wiesel Acceptance Speech—RAFT.docx
- Wiesel Acceptance Speech—RAFT.pdf

Materials

- Presentation Slides (attached)
- Wiesel Acceptance Speech (attached)
- RAFT Template (attached)
- RAFT for Mathematics (attached)
- RAFT for ELA (attached)
- RAFT for Science (attached)
- RAFT for Social Studies (attached)
- Instructional Strategy Note Sheet (attached)
- Authentic Learning and Teaching Rubric (attached)
- Scratch paper/half sheets of blank paper
- Markers, pens, or pencils
- Sticky note pads

Engage

Presenter's Note: Preparation

Before beginning, have all handouts and materials available on a table for participants. If you'd prefer, you may pass out the content-specific RAFTs when it is time for participants to use them during the session.

Welcome participants, and introduce yourself and the session using the attached **Presentation Slides**.

Display **slide 2**. Explain that when the Commit and Toss strategy is used with students, they use higher-order thinking. This strategy stimulates prior knowledge and connects it to new knowledge. Connecting to students' prior knowledge makes the lesson more meaningful.

Pose the question, "Why is writing an important skill for college and career readiness?" Instruct each participant to use a sheet of scratch paper (provided on the tables) and write their responses to the question. Give a minute or two for participants to write their answers. After all participants have written a response, tell them to crumple up their papers and have them toss their papers across the room on the count of three. Once everyone has tossed their papers, tell them to toss the papers again. Explain that this helps ensure answers are anonymous.

Ask participants to make sure everyone has a ball of paper, then have them make sure the ball of paper is not their own. Each participant reads the response on his or her ball of paper silently. At this point, have some participants share aloud the response they just read. Ask participants, "Did what you read change or reaffirm your original thoughts in any way?"

If time permits, a third round can be done where responses are shared aloud again.

Inform participants that several new instructional strategies will be introduced to them throughout the session. These strategies are tools used to support and guide higher-order thinking in an authentic way. Make sure each participant has a copy of the attached **Instructional Strategy Note Sheet**, and encourage participants to use it to jot down their ideas for personalizing a strategy to be used as an instructional tool in their classrooms. Before breaks and after the strategies have been modeled, the presentation will allow time for participants to reflect on how to use these strategies.

Go to **slide 3** to highlight the session objectives briefly. This will provide a roadmap of where you will go together during the session and will let participants know what to expect from the session.

Go to **slide 4** and introduce RAFT as a strategy that integrates reading and writing in a non-traditional way. Students take what they have read or learned to create a new product that illustrates their depth of knowledge. You may use fiction and nonfiction texts with this strategy. It can also be used across multiple content areas, as participants will explore more in depth later in the session. The format is flexible and offers limitless opportunities for creativity for both teacher and student.

Explore

Transition to **slide 5** and quickly introduce role, audience, format, and topic (RAFT) to participants.

Role of the Writer

Who or what are you as the writer? A pilgrim? A soldier? The president?

Audience

To whom are you writing? A friend? Your teacher? Readers of a newspaper?

Format

In what format are you writing? A letter? A poem? A speech?

Topic and Strong Verb

What are you writing about? Why? What's the subject or the point? What's the standard you are trying achieve?

Change to **slide 6** and have participants get out the handout **Wiesel Acceptance Speech** by Elie Wiesel that was provided to them at the beginning of the session. Explain that each participant will read the excerpt and choose a row on the back side of the handout from the RAFT to create their own written products.

Go to **slide 7** and display the RAFT, which is printed on the back of the handout. Allow participants time to choose a row and create their own RAFTs using the columns of role, audience, format, and topic from the handout.

After participants have had time to read, reflect, and write a RAFT from the provided materials, chose participants who used different roles to share their written responses.

Possible Response

Role: Young Jewish boy or girl - "Dear Mr. Wiesel, Thank you for taking time to make sure that the world will always remember what happened. The lives lost, the dreams that died, the families that were senselessly torn apart—you have given all of them a voice, and for those who survived, you have given them hope. It's hard to imagine, for those who were not there, what people must've endured. However, with great dignity, honesty, and openness, future generations will learn about the wrongs that took place, and that the human spirit was still strong and faith and determination was unwavering. You are to be honored and commended for your courageous work. Sincerely, a young Jewish boy or girl"

Explain

After participants have had an opportunity to share a few responses, pass out the core content area RAFT examples to their respective teachers. Transition through **slides 8-11** as needed.

At this point, explain to participants that these are only examples. The social studies example is the only one that is ready to use in a classroom setting, due to the fact that it is created and centered around a specific lesson or unit covering the World War II Executive Order 9066. Inform participants that the ELA, math, and science examples provide a wide range of subjects that are found in varying units, so they are not ready to use in a specific lesson with students.

Go to **slide 12** and encourage a few participants to explain how they could use this instructional strategy in their classrooms. Ask them the following questions:

- "How would you modify the content-area RAFT examples so that it would work with a specific unit or topic as an end-of-unit assessment in your classroom?"
- "How do you think your students would respond to this type of evaluation?"
- "What units/topics could this evaluation tool be used to make lessons more meaningful, and how would it help guide your instruction?"
- "What other roles, audiences, formats, and topics can you come up with to share with the group?"
- "As a teacher, why would this instructional strategy be useful to your class?"

Possible Responses

- "How would you modify the content area RAFT examples so that they would work with a particular unit or topic as an end-of-unit assessment in your classroom?" *I would keep the audience and format the same but make the role and topic more consistent with a unit I'm teaching my students.*
- "How do you think your students would respond to such an evaluation?" *In a math and science class, I think this would engage the students who enjoy writing and literary work. It would provide them with a chance to express themselves in written form, instead of strictly mathematical and scientific notation, while still using mathematical and scientific language. It would also push students who are more logical and analytical to work outside of their comfort zone to create written or expressive work and make connections that they are not used to creating. It would also encourage those who have a difficult time writing to practice in a safe environment.*
- "What units/topics could this evaluation tool be used to make lessons more meaningful, and how would it help guide your instruction?" *I could use this as a end-of-unit assessment where we have been examining different writing elements. I could use this in a lesson for our safety unit, provided the students know what each item is used for (e.g., goggles, gloves, eye-washing station, etc.)*
- "What other roles, audiences, formats, and topics can you come up with to share with the group?" [These answers could stem from the previous question but, more specifically, the elements you would use and plug in.]
- "As a teacher, why would this instructional strategy be useful to your class?" *This would be a great way to assess knowledge in a different form. It would also be a great review tool instead of giving them a paper to fill out with answers found in a book.*

Allow participants a moment to jot down their ideas for a RAFT on the Instructional Strategy Note Sheet.

Extend

Go to **slide 13** and remind participants that meetings and shared discussions are meaningful to help one another grow and continue to improve their use of not only the RAFT strategy, but all instructional strategies.

Transition to **slide 14** and have participants get out the **Authentic Learning and Teaching Rubric**. Ask them to examine the RAFT strategy as a group using the rubric. Questions to help stimulate conversations are the following:

- "How does this strategy connect back to authenticity?"
- "Did you notice any of the four components of authenticity?"
- "In the Elie Wiesel reading mini-lesson, where did you see connections of authentic learning?"
- "What might be a challenge in using a RAFT for your lesson?"
- "What were the highs and lows of authenticity in this session?"

Possible Responses

- "RAFT promotes skills such as analyzing and explaining concepts or knowledge learned. It creates a written connection from different viewpoints."
- "RAFT can create an opportunity to build dialogue among peers and can lead to questions that would simulate higher-order thinking skills."
- "RAFT can promote the application of ideas and make connections to material learned."
- "RAFT allows students ownership with shared control of choice in how they present their learning and knowledge."

Bring the discussion to a close after a few minutes. Encourage participants to reflect and jot down their thoughts and ideas on the Instructional Strategy Note Sheet.

Evaluate

Presenter's Note

TREK evaluations will be used in place of the evaluation activity when available. If you don't have access to a TREK evaluation, continue with the activity below.

At the end of the session, have participants individually use the 3-2-1 strategy as an Exit Ticket. Participants will write three things they learned from this session, two things they will implement in their classrooms, and one question they still have about the RAFT strategy.

If time allows, participants may share out their questions. This provides an opportunity for you, as the presenter, to clear up any misunderstandings or misconceptions about RAFT. It also provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on their learning.

Follow-up Activities

Research Rationale

The RAFT (role, audience, format, and topic) strategy is a research-based instructional strategy that engages students' prior knowledge allowing for connections to be constructed with new knowledge (Richards & Skolits, 2009). Used either as a summative or a formative assessment, RAFT can measure and demonstrate the depth of understanding a student has gained throughout a lesson, topic, or unit. Melin and Schiller (2011) find that the strategy provides differentiated choice and ownership for students. It also allows for teachers to differentiate because of flexibility and choice, which in turn will also motivate students to complete assignments. Richards and Skolits (2009) found that RAFT could be time consuming. However, their research showed that the results were worth the time needed to implement the RAFT instructional strategy, based on student-produced work and assessment outcome. This strategy allows students to think and evaluate from another's point of view and not to solely answer a question based on how they feel it should be answered. It also allows for the exploration of different writing types through fiction and nonfiction works. This flexible strategy can be used across multiple content areas and grade levels. The RAFT strategy allows teachers to assess student knowledge and growth in a creative, non-traditional way. The format is incredibly flexible and offers limitless opportunities for creativity for both teacher and student.

Resources

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