

# **ACTION LEARNING REPORT**

## **USING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS IN THE GED CLASS**

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### **Teaching context**

I work at the Ysleta Community Learning Center in El Paso, TX. This is an Adult Education Center where students have as a goal to obtain their GED diploma to get better employment. Most of the students there are older than 25 years of age. All my students had been for one or two years in this school, more of them have primary school in Mexico while others didn't have any studies. Currently I teach Spanish GED level 3 .I worked with adult students for more than 21 years in Cuba .I have a Bachelor degree in Science ,for this reason the areas that I feel more comfortable are Biology ,Chemistry and Physics.

### **Problem**

I chose my research topic because I was looking for an effective tool for students to identify the main idea of a reading passage in a short time; this is a big problem in teaching the Spanish GED.

Lack of comprehension motivated by bad reading habits compels students not to understand what they read . Along with the great amount of time they spend reading something short and simple are factors for me to use G.O. It has been proven in Literature and my personal experience its effectiveness to solve this type of problem.

This lack of comprehension is not exclusive to the areas of Science and Social Studies. This problem can also be noticed in Math, which also affects the thinking process and Mathematical reasoning. For this purpose it is a good practice to use G.O in this area because it helps in the thinking process previously mentioned

For this reason, I selected three subjects; two of them (Social Studies and Science) are subjects that require a high degree of comprehension and most students don't have previous knowledge of them. Also, I selected Math, because in this subject matter students have to solve a lot of analytical problems.

### **Research question**

What happens when I introduce the graphic organizers ( G.O ) for learning about the main idea in any text?

## **Action Learning Plan**

### **Introduction**

A graphic organizer is usually a one-page form with blank areas for the student to fill in with related ideas and information. Some organizers are very specific; others can be used with many topics. When a student first uses one kind of G.O , it is recommended that sample organizers be drawn on the board for the class to fill in together. This also gives them the opportunity to understand that sometimes there might be more answers than there are spaces on the organizer. The G.O also can be used to reinforce topics from any subject.

### **How to implement G.O into the classroom**

Without teacher instruction on how to use them, G.O may not be an effective learning tool. After I interviewed teachers and students about my research topic, I created a strategy to work with and without G.O's in the subjects selected. The procedure to follow was easy.

In the context of classroom the teacher shows different G.O formats describing the purpose of the G.O (e.g., find the main idea) and setting the reading purpose ( see appendix). This way the students learns how to identify the main idea using the G.O in a textbook After that, the teacher can model how to use the G.O. by drawing one on the board for the class to fill in together. This way student-teacher discussion and practice with feedback are consistently correlated with learning improvement. After that, I selected the most difficult topic in the three subjects.

In the end, there were specific suggestions that were useful for teaching with G.O. These guidelines include: verbalizing relationships between the concepts represented within the organizer, providing opportunities for student input, making reference to upcoming text, and reinforcing decoding and structural analysis, because the students can improve their knowledge , the have more success in comprehension use of vocabulary understanding of structural contexts.

The students worked using the G.O during 3 weeks and they compared the results without using the G.O. That way students recognized the effectiveness of this method.

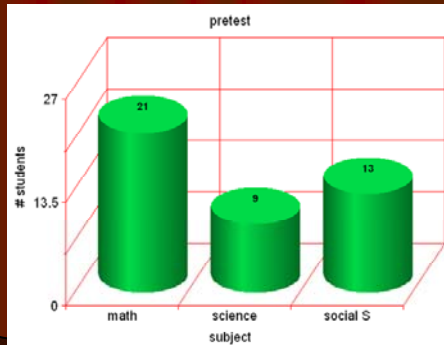
At the end students accepted this method like an effective tool to help themselves in the learning process of GED.

The use of G.O surprised us as a tool that not only was useful in working assignments but also in other subjects.

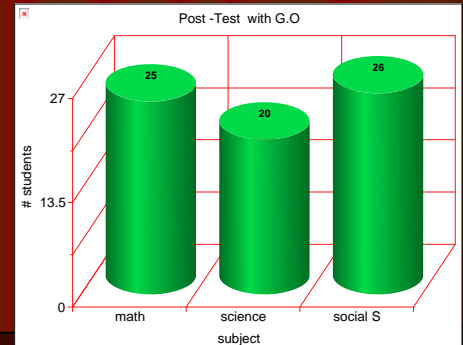
### **Findings and Conclusion**

As we can see from the scores for the pre-test and post-tests in the graphs below, there is a more substantial increase in learning when the students find the main idea using G.O in the subject areas of social studies and science than when it is not used. The increase in learning in Math is more modest when the students used G.O according to the characteristics of the subject matter ( geometry), even though students were already trained in this technique.

## Pre-test (without G.O)



## Pos-Test with G.O



It is very important for students to work with extra tools because the GED exams must be administered with time limit. Using tools would help students to reduce the time to answer questions. For this reason the data percentages show that the use of G.O ( in social studies) decreased the time they used to complete their responses, thus allowing them to take the test in a more efficient and relaxed manner.

G.O can be an effective learning tool when implemented within a substantive instructional context (main idea vs. time), particularly and interactive/collaborative approach, discussion, and practice with feedback. Also the students are able to appreciate the value of G.O for learning, and they feel that these tools are a good supplement in the current instructional context. This way we give an answer to the main focus obtained in the surveys with students : “ the absent of a tool would limit comprehension in reading as well as identify the main idea in a short period of time, thus giving an answer to our research problem.

### **Resources and References:**

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### **Appendix #1:**

Interview with teachers ( Spanish GED)

- .How do you define Graphic organizers?
- .Do you use G.O in your class?
- .How often do you use G.O? In what subjects?
- .Are you more successful in the class when you work with G.O's or without G.O's?  
Explain your answer( time ,subject ,etc)
- .Do you use any strategies when implementing G.O's in your classes?

### **Appendix # 2**

Interview with students

- How do you define G.O's?
- In what subject your teacher work with G.O?
- In what subjects your teacher work with G.O's?
- Do you like to work with G.O's? Why?
- Do you save time when you work with G.O's?

### **Appendix # 3** **Lesson Plans.**

**Activity Title:** Graphic Organizer Writing.

**Objective:** How to use a simple graphic organizer in order to find the main idea in different topics.

**Introduction:**

Organizational skills in Reading and Writing are important in both parts of the GED. Discuss with students how without organization, individuals often “ free-write”. Free writing is merely putting ideas on paper as they come into one’s mind and this is not a good way to write a quality essay. Let students know that using a G.O can assist them in identifying the main idea in a paragraph ( see pg. 35 Science Book)

**Activity:**

Provide students with a copy of a “graphic organizer web”. Explain the organization patterns of the web and how it can be developed into a well identified main idea. Give the students a topic or idea . An example would be to have students use the essay topic (pg. 36 Science book) and after wards the students will develop a graphic web around the word or idea in preparation for identifying the main idea. This will assist students in identify the main idea

Vs. time.

**Evaluation:**

Have students share their G.O with the class. Discuss the different types of ideas that come from one basic topic.

**Materials:**

Handouts of graphic organizer web

**Extension activity:**

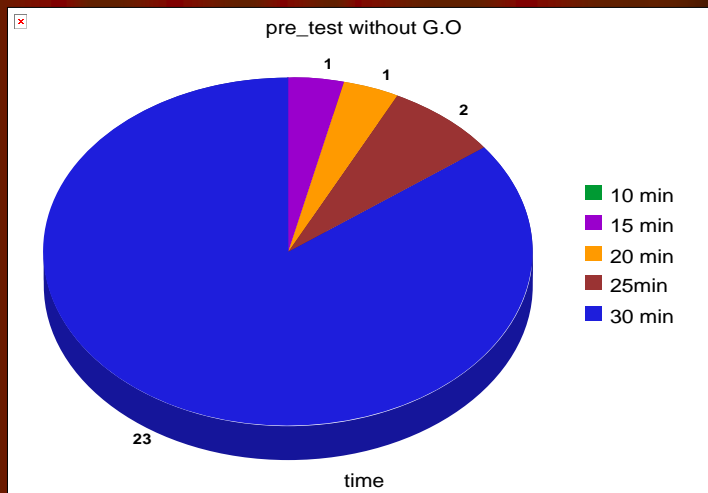
Using graphic organizer format to find the main idea in the paragraph (pg. 38 Science book)

**Real-life connection:**

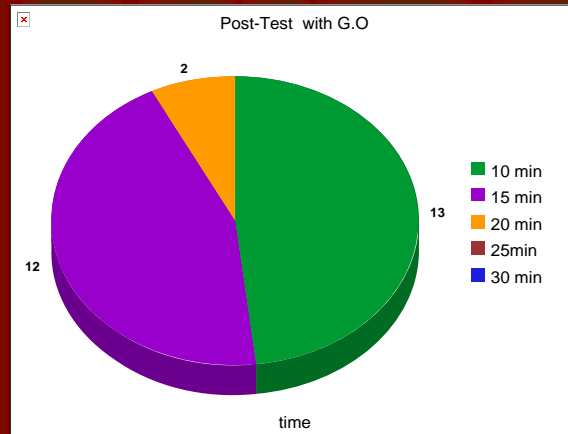
In real life people use G.O. Ask students to brainstorm all of the different ways



# Pre-test without G.O



# Post-Test with G.O



# Appendix #4

Name \_\_\_\_\_ edHelper.com Date \_\_\_\_\_

Put the main idea on the top of the mountain.  
Put supporting ideas in the shapes below.

The diagram is a large triangle representing a mountain. At the top is a small peak with a jagged line. Below the peak is a trapezoidal box labeled "Main idea". Below this box are two more trapezoidal boxes, one on the left and one on the right. At the base of the mountain are four rectangular boxes arranged in a row. Lines connect the boxes to form the structure of the mountain.

# Appendix #3

