Have you ever been looking for something only to discover it right before your eyes?

Text features epitomize this very situation: text features are structures, sometimes invisible before they are explicitly pointed out or taught, that authors use to cue readers and to clarify content.

Research has shown that both students and faculty make assumptions about text features. They often just skip over these aides as extraneous material that have no bearing on the task at hand. By making text structures visible to the reader, we apprentice our students in transferable, practical reading skills—and one that also transfers to writing.

Text structures fall into broad categories: conventions of text (titles, heading, legends, illustrations, etc.); conventions of print (bold type, italics, white space, punctuation, etc.); and conventions of genre (textbooks, maps, letters, software manuals, medical charts, etc).

When readers use these supporting structures effectively, they are better able to engage in the text by focusing their attention, contributing to their own comprehension, and assisting in information retrieval. This is one way to help college students make meaning of the wide variety of textbooks and occupational media that we use in our professional and technical classroom.

Furthermore, understanding text features is a key skill necessary in summarizing information, a skill that many of our students struggle with. Teaching students to identify and use the structures of text as signposts for comprehension is worth the investment it takes to develop this scaffold.

On January 12, 2010, in J-302 from 2:45–3:45 p.m., Michele Lesmeister will be presenting some ideas on how to model locating and calling out text features. She has created some text structure templates to help you become familiar with the purpose of certain text structures.

Come join the RAT Pack and see how these text structures can be used to improve your students' reading comprehension. These ready to use worksheets will assist you in introducing your winter quarter texts and journals.

Website of the Month

Literacy Matters' website on **Content Literacy: Text Structure** contains general strategies, links to several other helpful websites including those with lesson plans for teaching and using text structures.

[http://www.literacymatters.org/content/text/intro.htm](http://www.literacymatters.org/content/text/intro.htm)
Ask a RAT

What’s on your list of New Year’s resolutions?

- Read the monthly RAT Review newsletter for rataulous reading ideas
- Use RA routines at least once a week
- Wear your RATs t-shirt for RAT power and pride
- Encourage collaboration on reading tasks
- Revisit the text structures present in your materials
- Attend the monthly RATs training sessions
- Visit the RATs website and blog at http://rtc-rats.org
- Model more than you think is necessary
- Draft an article for the RAT Review newsletter
- Submit a RA Routine template to the RAT Hole
- Get wrapped up in a metacognitive moment!

Happy New Year

Library Item of the Month

The RTC Library has materials to support and help improve student reading and comprehension skills. For more info, contact the Library at 235-2331 or via email at librarian@RTC.edu.


RATs Calendar of Events

**Tues. Jan. 12, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302:** RATs Workshop on Using Text Features with Michele Lesmeister.

**Tues. Feb. 9, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302:** RATs workshop What’s in a Word? conducted by Jenna Pollock.

**Tues. Mar. 9, 2:45—3:45 PM in J-302:** RATs workshop on Inquiry with Debbie Crumb.

Join the RATs!

RATs (Reading Apprenticeship Teachers and supporters) is the RTC support group for those who want to use WestEd’s Reading Apprenticeship®. Become a RAT and learn how to help improve your students’ reading skills and comprehension.

The RAT Pack is the training and planning leadership team to help get you started. Contact one of them today for more info about RA or RATs:

- Debbie Crumb
- Jenna Pollock
- Michele Lesmeister, Team Leader

For more info about RA at RTC, scurry over to our RATs website and blog!

http://rtc-rats.org/

Online Student Reading Survey

Knowing your students’ reading processes can help you better understand their content reading needs. Have your students take the online Reading Survey from any student computer in the RTC Library or computer labs. Open the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser and click on the Favorites option. In the drop-down menu, click on the RTC College Reading Survey. Answer the questions and click on the Submit button. Contact Chris Johnson at ext. 5713 or Patricia Chakravarty at ext. 2042 in the R&D Dept. to extract student response data.