

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Practical Ideas to  
**Spark Up the Year**

Grades 4-8

CAREN CAMERON • KATHLEEN GREGORY  
COLLEEN POLITANO • JOY PAQUIN



# Introduction

## Who is this series for?

Voices of Experience is a series of six books – three for grades K-3, three for grades 4-8. Each book is full of practical ideas designed for new teachers, teachers new to a grade level, and teachers who want new ideas to reenergize their practice.

## What's in the books?

We have compiled our best ideas and organized them into two sets of three books:

- Book 1: for the start of the year when teachers are just getting to know their students
- Book 2: for during the year when teachers need to get themselves and their students “fired up”
- Book 3: for the end of the year when teachers need to wrap things up

Each book is organized into four sections around the acronym ROAR.

**R** = ideas for building relationships

**O** = ideas for classroom organization

**A** = ideas for classroom assessment that support student learning

**R** = ideas that are reliable and ready to use tomorrow

“Create a new model of teacher-teacher support so that every teacher knows every other teacher’s best ideas.”

— Eric Jensen,  
*Brain-Based Learning*

For each idea we provide a brief discussion and easy-to-follow steps. Many also include student examples and unique adaptations. In addition, we have included current information about the brain and how students learn.

We have also included a variety of ways to use this series of books to support professional development activities in different settings; for example, educators' book clubs; team and department meetings and staff meetings; in-service and pre-service workshops; and seminars with student teachers (see appendix A).

**Final Note:**

The single, most important message we want to leave you with is to listen to your own voice and the voices of your students. Adapt our ideas to fit for you, your students, and your school community.

# Summary Structures:

## making information easier to recall

*“Remember, that the brain that does the work is the brain that remembers.”*

— David A. Sousa,  
*The Leadership Brain*

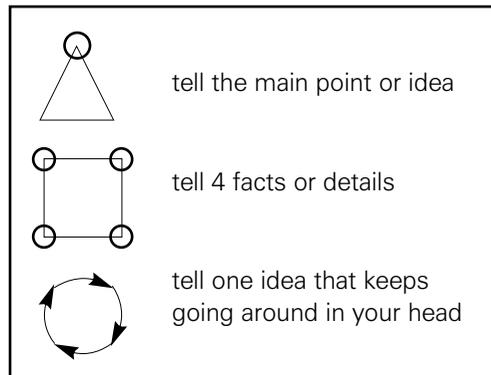
### DISCUSSION

When information is summarized, it is easier to recall. Teach students a variety of ways to select information and state it in a clear and concise form. We offer two summary structures for students to try out and add to their repertoire.

### IDEA #1 SUMMARY SHAPES

#### STEPS

1. Tell students that they are going to learn a new way to summarize information. Draw a triangle, a square, and a circle on the board and tell them they are going to collect specific information and record it beside each shape (see figure 52).
2. Read students a short piece of text aloud. We select a newspaper article, information about an animal or sport, or a chapter from a novel.
3. Show students how to complete “summary shapes” by recording information beside each shape. Explain reasons for selecting only certain information.



**Figure 52.** Summary shapes to collect specific information

4. Have students draw a triangle, a square, and a circle on a piece of paper. Ask them to read a short piece of text and record information beside each of the shapes. We have learned to use short, simple, and interesting pieces to introduce ideas such as “summary shapes.” Students can then put their energy into learning the new structure instead of struggling with difficult text.
5. Meet as a class and invite volunteers to tell what they recorded for one of their shapes and why they recorded what they did.
6. Give students opportunities to use summary shapes with different texts including short passages from science and social studies textbooks.

## IDEA #2 30-SECOND SPEECH

### STEPS

1. Tell students that they are going to learn another way to summarize information. Record the frame for a “30-second speech” on chart paper (see figure 53).
2. Give students a copy of a short piece of text. Read it aloud as the students follow along.
3. Fill in the frame for a “30-second speech,” explaining to students why you selected specific information (see figure 54). Present the speech to the class. We ask a student to time us for 30 seconds so everyone has a sense of how short the time frame is.
4. Give students a short piece of text that is interesting but not too difficult to summarize.
5. Ask students to read the text and complete the frame. Have them meet with a partner and present their “30-second speeches” to one another.
6. Give students opportunities to practice the “30-second speech” so it becomes a reliable way to summarize information. We have students use this activity to warm up at the beginning of class or to wrap up at the end.

### 30-Second Speech

The topic is \_\_\_\_\_

Three things I learned :

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

One question I have OR  
my favourite part is

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 53.** Frame for “30-Second Speech”

### 30-Second Speech

The topic is Roberta Bondar

Three things I learned:

- she's an astronaut
- she was the only woman out of 4300 people to get to go in space
- she was in space for 8 days

One question I have OR  
my favourite part is

How did she sleep in space? Do you float around?

**Figure 54.** Completed “30-Second Speech”

# 30-Second Speech

The topic is \_\_\_\_\_

Three things I learned :

● \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

● \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

● \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One question I have OR

my favourite part is

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

© 2004 Portage & Main Press. May be reproduced for classroom use.

Figure 53. (page 49)