



Getting Started with MOLLY OF DENALI®

About MOLLY OF DENALI®

MOLLY OF DENALI is set in the fictional village of Qyah, Alaska, and features 10-year-old Molly Mabray and her family, friends, and visitors. The series presents multilayered stories that blend educational goals involving informational text, Alaska Native values, social-emotional skills, and content knowledge in science and social studies. Engaging characters, adventurous plots, and humor round out the appeal of the stories.



using MOLLY OF DENALI® in the Classroom

The videos, games, and hands-on activities from the PBS KIDS series MOLLY OF DENALI provide many opportunities for learning with informational texts. MOLLY OF DENALI content can help children learn to access (read and listen to) informational texts, as well as create them (through writing and presenting), in order to solve real-world problems, take advantage of opportunities, accomplish tasks, and satisfy their curiosity. Use a MOLLY OF DENALI lesson as part of a larger unit you are teaching in literacy, social studies, or STEM that integrates the use of informational text for real-world purposes.



In each MOLLY OF DENALI episode, there are two 11-minute animated stories, plus a 2-minute “Ask Molly” live-action segment featuring children doing a related activity. Before using a MOLLY OF DENALI lesson, preview the video so you can answer students’ questions, direct their attention as needed, and customize the lesson to meet the needs of your class.

Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

The MOLLY OF DENALI lesson plans use the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Duke, Pearson, Strachan & Billman, 2011), which gradually transfers responsibility for use of the knowledge, strategy, or skill from the teacher to the student. Responsibility is transferred in five steps, as described below.

Step 1: Explicit Instruction

The teacher identifies the knowledge, strategy, or skill that will be the focus of the lesson and provides an explicit description of what it is and when and how it should be used. This could include explicitly teaching knowledge (e.g., explaining a diagram and its use); a strategy (e.g., how to ask oneself questions while reading); or a skill (e.g., using an index to find information).

Step 2: Modeling

The teacher models the use of the knowledge, strategy, or skill while reading, writing, listening, or speaking. For example, if the focus is the problem-solution text structure, the teacher might model how to identify the problem by using signal phrases. They would verbalize their thinking aloud, pointing out phrases in the text, such as “One problem is...” or “It’s difficult to...”. Then they would look for signal phrases to help identify possible solutions.

Step 3: Collaborative Use

After modeling the use of the knowledge, strategy, or skill, potentially multiple times, the teacher invites students to use it collaboratively while reading, writing, listening, or speaking. The teacher and students use it together, sharing their thinking and their reasoning.

Step 4: Guided Use

The teacher coaches students as they apply the knowledge, strategy, or skill they have learned as they read and write about a science or social studies topic. Then they discuss their use of it, their reasoning, and its effectiveness in helping them understand the text, build content knowledge, or communicate their ideas. This step can continue with several “chunks” of the text.

Step 5: Independent Use

Students have opportunities to use the knowledge, strategy, or skill independently or with little teacher support while reading, writing, listening, or speaking. Prior to independent work, the teacher reminds students of what the knowledge, strategy, or skill is, how and when to use it, and why it is helpful.

Things to consider and remember:

1. During Collaborative Use and Guided Use, it is important that teachers have ample opportunity to coach students in using the knowledge, strategy, or skill while engaged in reading, writing, listening, or speaking before expecting independent use of the strategy. Teacher coaching might range from making clear statements that affirm effective use of the strategy to additional modeling of the strategy.
2. The gradual release of responsibility is not a script. The use of knowledge, strategies, and skills to comprehend or write a text is dynamic, and so is the teaching of them. Teachers need to be responsive to children’s engagement with the text and application of the knowledge, strategies, or skills. Steps of the process will need to be revisited within or across lessons. Students’ use of taught knowledge, strategies, or skills may require more or less support based on their familiarity with a topic or the complexity of the text.
3. Strategy instruction is not an end in itself. It should help students improve their understanding of a text in order to build knowledge or communicate more effectively. It should support students as they become readers and writers who know when, why, and how to apply knowledge, strategies, or skills to comprehend and communicate through a multitude of texts.

Sources:

Duke, N. K., Pearson, P. D., Strachan, S. L., & Billman, A. K. (2011). Essential elements of fostering and teaching reading comprehension. In S. J. Samuels & A. E. Farstrup (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (4th ed., pp. 51–93). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Pearson, P. D., & Gallagher, M. C. (1983). The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8(3), 317–344. Washington, DC: University of Illinois, National Institute of Education.



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