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As you begin to establish routines and encourage rich discussions in these early weeks of school, I find it helpful to invite students to create a chart of behavior guidelines that support the meaningful exchange of ideas. At right is an example of what such a chart might look like.

Behavior Guidelines for Discussions

- Come prepared: complete the reading, bring your journal.
- Be a good listener.
- Value and encourage diverse thinking with support from texts.
- Ask probing follow-up questions.

Assessment

The first several weeks are important not only for establishing routines, but also for making initial assessments of your students. In a differentiated classroom, ongoing assessments are key. They allow you to target students' needs and to help them grow as readers.

ASSESS STUDENTS DURING THE FIRST WEEKS OF SCHOOL

Use the first three or four weeks of school to get to know your students. If you get to know them as readers and people, you will not only understand their attitudes toward reading but will learn about their strengths and their ability to use fix-up strategies to solve reading problems. Remember, the more you know about your students' reading lives and achievement, the better equipped you are to estimate their instructional reading levels and recommend texts for independent reading that interest them.

You don't have to complete all the suggestions that follow. I recommend that you study standardized test patterns and compare them to students' daily achievement. Have students complete an interest inventory and the eleven questions about reading. If you spread the following assessments over three to four weeks, students can complete most of them, providing you with data needed to estimate instructional reading levels.

Eleven questions about reading. You'll find these questions on appendix page 266. Show students how to respond to these eleven questions using a think-aloud and noting on chart paper your responses to each one. Respond to a few questions each day, over a period of



three days. Then invite students to write about their reading lives; completion time will vary. Students can work on these questions during independent reading and writing time.

Interest inventory. Interest inventories for two different grade levels are on pages 267–268. I find that students are honest, and their responses let me know their attitudes toward reading, their favorite genres and authors, their knowledge of strategies, and their television habits. Knowing this enables you and the school librarian to suggest books and magazines on topics students care deeply about.

What's easy? What's hard? Show students how you complete a “What's easy? What's

Interest Inventory for Grades 6 and up

Name Tanisha W. Date March 21

Complete this survey so your teacher and school librarian can help you find books you will want to read.

1. What do you enjoy doing most in your free time? playing hoops
2. What sports do you enjoy playing? Explain why. basketball and tennis
3. What sports do you love to watch? Explain why. basketball and soccer
4. What is your favorite subject? Why do you enjoy it? Chem.
I like to sing.
5. Do you have any hobbies? List a few, and then write about your favorite one. listening to music
6. Do you have a favorite author? If so, can you explain why you love to read his/her book?
7. If you could travel back in time, where would you go? Explain your answer.
8. Do you read comic books and magazines? Which ones do you enjoy most? Yeah. Teen magazines + romance mag
9. What kinds of music do you enjoy? Do you have a favorite group? Instrument? Musician? Name these. Rap, Rock, + Street music
10. What kinds of books do you enjoy the most when you read on your own? Use the list below to help you choose the genres you enjoy. don't read novels

<input type="checkbox"/> mystery	<input type="checkbox"/> historical fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> science fiction
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> romance	<input type="checkbox"/> biography/autobiography	<input type="checkbox"/> diaries
<input type="checkbox"/> realistic fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> series books	<input type="checkbox"/> letters
<input type="checkbox"/> information books	<input type="checkbox"/> folktales	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> magazines
<input type="checkbox"/> fantasy	<input type="checkbox"/> short stories	<input type="checkbox"/> myths and legends
<input type="checkbox"/> funny stories	<input type="checkbox"/> history	<input type="checkbox"/> graphic novels

FIGURE 2.1: Tanisha's interest inventory shows a preference for magazines and shows me the kinds of free reading I'll suggest to her at first.

WHAT'S EASY? WHAT'S HARD?

Name Bobby J. Date Sept 15

What's Easy About Reading? Why?
free reading books
magazines & like
nothing

What's Hard About Reading? Why?
summaries
fantasy book - words to hard
learning vocab. 20+ words
science & to many new words

FIGURE 2.2: Note how honestly Bobby answered these questions.

hard?” exercise about reading. Help them understand that there are times when reading is tough for you. Then ask students to reflect on their reading strengths and needs by explaining “What's easy? and What's hard?” for them about reading. This can provide you with insights into how students perceive themselves as readers. Use these clues at a conference to explore ways you can support each student.



Read Aloud to Model How You Apply Strategies

You can introduce a strategy through a read aloud, using the same passages you used to build background knowledge. The strategic read aloud is one of three strategic reading layers you'll use as you move students toward independent strategy use. First, you model for students. Next, you support them as they practice applying the strategy to their instructional reading. Finally, they use the strategy as they read independently.

The power that strategic read alouds unleash is that they provide you with multiple opportunities to show students how you apply a comprehension-building strategy before, during, or after reading. The repeated modeling keeps students focused on the strategy and can enhance and deepen their understanding of how the strategy works to their advantage. Here are two examples of how I planned and delivered a strategic read aloud in both a sixth-grade and an eighth-grade class.

STRATEGIC READ ALOUD: GRADES SIX AND EIGHT

PURPOSE To introduce a strategy to students; to show how to apply a specific strategy while reading and how it helps students

TIME 10–15 minutes for preparation; 6–7 minutes for presentation

MATERIALS A short selection from a picture or chapter book, or an article or a passage from your read-aloud text

HOW IT HELPS STUDENTS Modeling the application of a strategy during read alouds helps students build their prior knowledge of the strategy and how it works. Modeling during your read aloud for several days offers students multiple opportunities for observing how you apply the strategy to build comprehension.

I recommend that you continue modeling the strategy, using the five steps described on pages 71–72, two or three times a week. In addition to deepening students' understanding of how a specific strategy supports constructing meaning from a text, you will be introducing students to picture books or magazine and newspaper articles they might not choose to read on their own. I store my modeling materials in a crate or on a bookshelf and encourage students to dip into these during independent reading. I find that many students check out these texts later on because the short read aloud aroused their interest and curiosity.



PREPARING THE LESSON

The first time you try this type of lesson, you are apt to feel uncomfortable; I did. My tongue thickened, and the words sounded awkward. Practice will eliminate these feelings, and you'll easily and fluently present lessons like this.

1. Decide on the strategy you'll focus on. For this three-week unit on suffrage, the teacher and I focused on drawing conclusions about a person's character. The goal was to help students understand the personality traits needed to create lasting change.
2. Select a text. The text we used in this lesson is "Elizabeth Cady Stanton" from *Rabble Rousers: 20 Women Who Made a Difference* by Cheryl Harness.
3. Write the five steps you will follow on chart paper.
 - Name the strategy.
 - Explain how to do it, why it helps, and when it works.
 - Summarize, if necessary, the key points of any text you have previously read.
 - Read the passage aloud.
 - Think aloud during and after the reading to show how you apply the strategy.
4. Explicitly state the steps as you model so students can follow the lesson with ease. This also provides students with a process for doing partner think alouds with the strategy later on in the unit (see pages 73–75).

PRESENTING THE LESSON

1. **Name the strategy.** I tell students:

Today I'm going to show you how I draw conclusions about Elizabeth Cady Stanton's personality.

2. **Explain how to do it, why it helps, and when it works.** Here's my think aloud:

When you draw conclusions about a person, you use what you learn about them to infer what they were like. Doing this helps you understand the person's decisions, actions, and words. Use this strategy with biography, fiction, interviews, and news stories. Today I'm going to read a section of this short biography about Elizabeth Cady Stanton, select some details, and then use these to figure out her personality traits.

3. **Summarize the key points of any text you have previously read.**

When Elizabeth Cady Stanton married, like other women who lived in the 19th century, she had no rights. If she worked, or inherited land or money, her husband owned it all. Children