

Strategies and activities for working on problem solving, making inferences, getting the broader understanding:

Discussions that focus on a variety of topics, including problem solving

Activities that help children understand the world, in and out of the classroom

Activities that help children learn to preview selections, anticipate content, and make connections between what they will read and what they already know.

Activities that encourage discussion about what is being read and how ideas can be linked (e.g. to draw conclusions and make predictions).

Say It Like the Character

This oral strategy focuses on the difference between the way students read silently and orally and it helps students make inferences about how the character is speaking and feeling by reading dialogue aloud. Students silently read. Next the teacher selects one passage for them to reread silently the way they think the characters might make it sound. Then one student is asked to read it aloud, trying to voice it with the intention and feelings that the characters would have. The class discusses the way silent and oral reading of the passage are different and how oral helped to express character's feelings, creating a stronger personal connection with the text.

Poll Talk

This oral strategy true-false opinion poll is handed out after students finish reading a text. Students have time to chose their opinions and to think of reasons for their position. The teacher asks all who chose false on a question to raise their hands and then he/she asks individuals to elaborate on their answers, using the poll as a springboard for discussion. This strategy does away with a few people dominating a discussion. *Alternatively, students can move around the room when they respond to the poll.* Also, the poll can be extended into a writing assignment (picking one question about which a student has a definite opinion and...).

Strategies and activities for elaborating/providing explicit verbal responses:

Story Mapping

This strategy helps students use what they know of narrative structure to analyze stories using a key story element graphic organizer. This aids student understanding and retention of the story. To reinforce key elements of the story, first ask for and list the types of things (the who, where, when, what happens, how did it end and why) the students want to know about a story they are going to read.

Read a short story, clearly fitting the element structure, to the students. The students fill in blank Story Maps as the teacher models the process on an overhead transparency, emphasizing recording only major events that move the plot and circling the initiating event which sets the story in motion. During modeling, review types of possible conflict: within a person, between people, and between people and nature. Model how to use the map information to determine the author's theme, stresses that conflict and the way it is resolved give insight into possible points the author may have wanted to communicate in the story.

Show how significant questions relate to setting character development, plot events, the conflict and resolution, and the author's possible themes. Also show how questions may concern author's craft (language usage and literary devices) used to develop story parts. Next students analyze a short story read independently and then complete a Story Map with a partner. Finally the whole group discusses the author's theme based on their collected story evidence.

Oral stories- have student practice telling oral stories.

Cubing

Cubing is a literacy strategy in which students explore a topic from 6 dimensions (viewpoints):

- 1) describing topic
- 2) comparing the topic to something else
- 3) associating the topic with something else and explaining reason for the association
- 4) analyzing the topic and telling how it is made
- 5) telling of what it is composed and
- 6) arguing for or against the topic.

The teacher chooses a topic related to a thematic unit. Students are divided into 6 groups, each of which examines the topic from one of the 6 dimensions, or students can form 6-member groups

in which each group member is responsible for one dimension. Students brainstorm ideas about their dimension using a quick write or a quick draw. To make it visual, they share them with the class and attach them to the sides of a cube box. Students share orally.

This strategy offers a way to focus studying and make broad ideas more graspable. Dimension #2 and #3 require students to connect their own lives to the content they are learning and #4-6 require students to use higher thinking skills to analyze, apply and evaluate.

Debate Strategy

Debate is a strategy that practices oral language skills and higher order thinking skills through structured argument while discussing content knowledge.

Discovering the Main Idea

Strategies for helping students find the main idea of a passage or story: The teacher copies 2-3 pages of material from a text with sub-topic headings deleted (whited out), students read it and supply sub-topic headings which would be the paragraph main idea.

Technical Vocabulary and Language Development

This strategy for vocabulary and language development is a word categorizing exercise that requires thinking on an interpretive level. The teacher creates sets of 4 words in which 3 of the set words are related. Students circle the unrelated word. On a line at the top of the set, they write the word or phrase that explains the relationship among the remaining 3 words.

Think, Note, Write: Value Boxes

Value Boxes is a strategy to help students go from thinking to writing with a specific graphic organizer that prepares them to structure written arguments. It is used to categorize and note the values associated with some idea or situation in 3 areas: good(+), bad (-). and interesting.

Partners or small groups meet to share ideas and add to lists which are then used to begin writing. Muller recommends this as a way to get well-organized and fully developed arguments. In history this strategy can be used to answer higher level thinking questions that require reflection on the value of historical decisions or the impact of historical events. Muller suggests for pre-writing, having students record positive, negative, and interesting points that are neutral in impact. Then they would write an expository essay that includes a thesis evaluating the impact and an argument that draws from the points students wrote in the Value Boxes.

Compass Group-Four Way Share

This strategy, for use in any content area, engages students in listening to and generating oral language. The four-way sharing gives equal access to all students and helps 'manage' classroom talk, especially after charged issues have come up, or if a heated debate is brewing. Four students sit on the floor facing each other from the positions of the cardinal directions. At teacher's direction, "North" speaks for a full five minutes and the rest of the group listens. After about 25 minutes, each child will have had a chance to share.

It may be advisable to start with only 30 seconds or 1 minute until kids feel more comfortable, doing multiple circuits around the compass. Group members may be interchanged after a circuit or two. Teacher monitoring of conversations will provide important feedback about how long students are able to effectively use their speaking/listening time. Attentive selection of issues, topic or prompt is important to the success of this activity.

Fast Talk

With a partner or in a small group, students randomly select a vocabulary word or term that is relevant to course content from a 'hat'. Using complete sentences, the student must then speak for one full minute (visual timers are handy) about that topic.

This strategy encourages students to practice skills needed in daily conversation and debate (memory retrieval, structuring arguments for clarity etc.).

Teachers should stay tuned in to groups, to ensure that students have the 'right idea' and are not misinforming their peers about content.

Sources: http://www.stanford.edu/group/step/new-step-website/resources/LanguageSite/History_Strategies.html

http://suse-step.stanford.edu/resources/LanguageSite/English_Language_Strategies.html

<http://www.earlyliterature.ecsd.net/oral.htm>