Teacher Tool Kit – Reading Strategies

**Concept Map**

Concept maps are visual representations students create to connect ideas, concepts, and terms. Students can use them to organize information they already know and to incorporate new learning with this prior knowledge. Concept maps help you see how students understand content.

How to Use

1. Brainstorm

Have students brainstorm main ideas and terms related to an assigned topic.

2. Organize

Organize these ideas from general to specific. Cluster ideas or terms that are similar to one another.

3. Map

Students should write the terms in the appropriate cells of the concept map. Arrange and add cells as needed.

4. Connect

Draw arrows or lines to connect the cells that contain words that are related. Words or phrases can be written along these lines to explain the relationship between the cells.

When to Use

Concept maps are very versatile and can be used in any grade level and for all content areas.

* To organize ideas while reading a story, novel, or article
* During the Guided Practice section of a lesson so students can synthesize information just covered
* As a closing activity so that students can review what was learned in the lesson
* Before a unit to access prior knowledge
* As an assessment tool or to check for understanding

Variations

* Mind Map

This is a similar tool to a Concept Map but can be more flexible and personal, as it represents a “map” of the student’s mind when thinking about a particular topic or concept. Mind Maps typically include pictures, drawings, and diagrams when expressing connections between ideas. Instead of using a set template, the students create their own mind map on a blank piece of paper.

**Stop and Jot**

This processing activity gives students the opportunity to respond to questions in writing. Asking students to think and write about what they are learning promotes retention and comprehension. These quick checks for understanding help students make sense of what they are learning before moving on in the lesson.

How to Use

1. Stop

Ask students to draw a rectangle on the page where they are taking notes for the day. This will serve as their “stop box.”

2. Jot

At least once during a lesson, stop and ask an important question for students to respond to in their “stop box.”

3. Share

Reconvene and ask volunteers share one or two responses with the whole class or, model your own response. These boxes also help students later by serving as a study tool, highlighting important information about the topic.

When to Use

Use Stop and Jot at any point in the lesson to provide processing time and note-taking assistance for students:

* Before introducing new material to activate prior knowledge
* Before a new lesson to help assess what students already know
* Before a lesson to assist with planning instruction
* During the middle of a lesson to provide opportunity for students to make sense of the material
* During a lesson as a check for understanding
* During a lesson to provide time for students to create a written summary statement of auditory material
* After the lesson to provide closure, check understanding, and clarify any misunderstandings
* After a lesson to clarify key ideas or critical pieces of information
* After the lesson to allow students to make connections to previously learned material
* After a lesson to allow students to find personal relevance

Variations

* Jot-Pair-Share

Similar to Think-Pair-Share, a student jots down his or her own thoughts, pairs with a partner to exchange ideas, and then partners share their ideas with the rest of the class.

* Quick Jot

Students are given between 60 to 90 seconds to respond to a given question or statement posed by the teacher.

* Stop and Fill

If it is important that key points or important words are noted as students listen to auditory materials or read written material as they work independently, a Stop and Jot sheet with blanks to be filled in will be the best way to capture key information.

* Group Jot

After completing the original Stop and Jot activity, ask students to compare their jots with a small group of students. Students discuss their Jots and add information to their notes based on this discussion. Students may also be asked to present a summary of their thoughts to the class.

* Jot Survey

Instead of drawing a Stop Box on their note taking paper, students write their Jots on sticky notes. Students then take their sticky note Jots and post them on posters around the room. Posters may be made for individual questions or topics based on the content being covered. The teacher then sends the students around the room in small groups to survey the jots written by their classmates making comments or additions to their notes.

**Save the Last Word for Me**

This discussion technique encourages meaningful classroom conversations by eliciting differing opinions and interpretations of text. Asking students to think about their reading stimulates reflection and helps to develop active and thoughtful readers. Save the Last Word for Me also prompts classroom interaction and cooperative group discussion.

How to Use

1. Read

Assign a section of text and ask students to find three to five quotes from the text that they think are particularly interesting. The quotes may be something they agree or disagree with, something they find interesting, something they didn’t know, something they would like to tell someone about, etc.

2. Write

Pass out index cards or slips of paper to each student, one card for each quote they have found. On one side of the card, ask students to write down the statements from the text. On the other side, instruct them to write any comments or feelings about their statements.

3. Group and Share

Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students. All students in the group are allowed to share one of their quote cards. The first student reads one of their quotes to the group and shows where to locate it in the text. However, the student isn’t allowed to make any comments about his or her quote until the other members of the group give their reactions. Therefore, the student gets the last word in the discussion of the statement. This process continues until everyone in the group has shared at least one quote and has provided the last word in the discussion.

When to Use

Use Save the Last Word for Me at any point in the lesson to structure meaningful conversation:

* While reading a story, novel, professional article, or chapter of text
* After completing a reading selection that could be debatable or thought-provoking
* Before students debate a topic
* When teaching fact vs. opinion and how to support an opinion
* As a researching or note-taking tool before writing a paper

Variations

* Film-Watching

Students can use this same strategy while watching a film, choosing five moments in the film, five actions, five characters, five images . . .

* Using Images

This same process can be used with images instead of quotations. Give students a collection of posters, paintings and photographs from the time period you are studying and then ask students to select three images that stand out to them.

* Using Question

Ask students to write down three “probing” questions the text raises for them. Students answer the questions on the back of their cards. In small groups, students select one of their questions for the other students to discuss (see Sentence Stems or Talk Like a Genius for question stems).

**Guided Notes**

Guided Notes are teacher-prepared handouts that outline lectures, audiovisual presentations, or readings, but leave blank space for students to fill in key concepts, facts, definitions, etc. Guided Notes promote active engagement during lecture or independent reading, provide full and accurate notes for use as a study guide, and help students to identify the most important information covered.

How to Use

1. Prioritize

Decide what is most important for students to understand in the presentation or reading for which they will be taking notes.

2. Create

Prepare a set of notes that contains the essential information from the presentation or reading.  Underline or highlight the key concepts, facts or information that students will be responsible for writing into the final version.  Next, replace those concepts with blanks for the students to fill in.

3. Explain

Prior to handing out copies of the Guided Notes in class, ensure that students understand their responsibility to fill in each of the blanks with the appropriate concepts, definitions, or other content to help them understand what they will be seeing, hearing, or reading.

4. Review

Discuss the correct answers with the class as the presentation progresses or after the reading.

When to Use

Use Guided Notes at any point in the lesson to structure meaningful conversation and appropriate note taking. Guided Notes help:

* Provide framework that students can preview before a presentation or a reading
* Accommodate diverse learning styles
* Keep students focused and engaged
* After a lecture to serve as a review
* Help you monitor student comprehension of key concepts
* Serve as a review document for students
* Assist ELL’s with support in the structure/outline of the language, so they can focus on vocabulary building and concept understanding

Variations

* Student-Created Guided Notes

As a cooperative-learning exercise, a group of students can be assigned a section from a text and asked to compose a set of Guided Notes based on its content. The teacher can then review and edit the notes as needed before providing them to the class.

* Context Clues Cloze Exercise

The teacher prepares a paragraph with certain words left out. This cloze tool can be used to evaluate the use of context clues by the student to fill in the blanks with appropriate words that fit the context of the paragraph. This can also be used as a diagnostic reading assessment.

**Jigsaw**

This cooperative-learning reading technique gives students the opportunity to specialize in one aspect of a topic, master the topic, and teach the material to group members. Asking students to work together in a Jigsaw builds comprehension, encourages cooperation, and improves communication and problem-solving skills.

How to Use

1. Prepare

Divide the reading selection into four segments or prepare four separate reading selections on the content you are teaching. Put students into groups of four. These groups will be the “home groups” of the jigsaw. Prepare a direction sheet to help students to answer questions and gather information on each segment or selection.

2. Introduce to Home Groups

Divide the class into their home groups. Explain the strategy and the topic of study. Tell students that they are going to be responsible for teaching one segment or selection to the group they are sitting with now.

3. Break into Expert Groups

Now students will leave their home group to sit with a group of students assigned to the same reading segment or selection, their “expert group.” Ask students to begin reading to themselves or have them take turns reading aloud. When students are finished reading, the group should discuss their segment, fill out their direction sheet, and decide what and how they should present to their home groups.

4. Regroup with "Home Groups"

Students regroup with their home groups. Each student is responsible for teaching their reading segment or selection to their home group. All students are responsible for learning all material. Determine how you’d like students to organize and summarize all the information they’ve learned. For example, you can provide a graphic organizer or ask them to make a poster to share with the class.

When to Use

Use Jigsaw at any point in the lesson to structure meaningful conversation across a wide range of material. Use it when you are:

* Building background knowledge on a unit of study
* Conducting an author study before beginning a new novel
* Learning about different viewpoints on a historical event or discovery
* Focusing on complementary – or divergent – concepts in a unit of study
* Reviewing different aspects of a unit of study to prepare for an assessment

Variations

* Expert Group Panels

To work on students’ discussion and presentation techniques in a larger group setting, have the expert groups present to the class. In turn, the whole class is responsible for asking questions and learning about each topic.

**Frayer Model**

The Frayer Model is a graphic organizer for building student vocabulary. This technique requires students to define target vocabulary and apply their knowledge by generating examples and non-examples, giving characteristics, and/or drawing a picture to illustrate the meaning of the word. This information is placed on a chart that is divided into four sections to provide a visual representation for students.

How to Use

1. Select Key Vocabulary

Pre-select key vocabulary words and make copies of graphic organizer.

2. Provide Graphic Organizer

Provide copies of the Frayer Model graphic organizer to students and explain the process.

3. Model the Process

Show the Frayer graphic organizer to the class and explain each of the sections.

Use a common vocabulary word to demonstrate the various components of the form. Model the type and quality of desired answers when giving this example.

4. Assign Student Groups

Divide the class into student pairs. Assign each pair one of the key concepts and have them complete the four-square organizer for this concept. Or, assign each student one word to work on alone.

5. Share Ideas

Ask students or student pairs to share their conclusions with the entire class. Use these presentations to review the entire list of key concepts.

6. Create Study Helps

Make copies of each Frayer graphic organizer so every student has a copy of all key concepts to use for review. OR display completed Frayer graphic organizers on a “Vocabulary Wall” for student reference.

7. Optional Extension

Extend or deepen students’ thinking by asking students to:

• Describe the rationale for examples and non-examples

• Asking students to use the Frayer Model as a note taking strategy during reading.

• Asking students to change the titles of the boxes to include concept development categories.

When to Use

Students may use the Frayer Model to:

* + develop understanding of key concepts and vocabulary.
  + draw on prior knowledge to make connections among concepts.
  + compare attributes and examples.
  + think critically to find relationships between concepts and to develop deeper
  + understanding of word meanings
  + make visual connections and personal associations.
  + review key vocabulary before a test or quiz
  + create a “vocabulary wall” for quick reference of word meaning

Variations

* Elements of a Typical Frayer Model

A typical Frayer “4-square” model includes the following elements:

• Definition (either from teacher or in student’s own words

• Examples

• Non-examples

• Characteristics or illustration of concept

* Alternate Elements of Frayer Model- Example 1

Vary this typical model by changing the 4 elements to:

• Examples

• Non-examples

• Essential Characteristics

• Non-essential characteristics

* Alternate Elements of Frayer Model- Example 2

Give students a Frayer model with all the squares filled in and ask students to guess the vocabulary word.

* Use Pic Collage

Use the Pic Collage app for IPad to allow students to create Frayer model graphic organizers using a tablet device.