



Big 6 Handbook: Activities to Support Literacy in New York State

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Introduction

“There is no single road to becoming literate; rather it is extremely important to legitimize the concept of multiple roads to literacy.” —Yetta Goodman

Despite the rhetoric from corporate literacy program producers, we, Kathy and Logan, the editors of this work, do not believe that there is one best way for all students to become adept at literacy. Rather, we embrace the idea of multiple paths to literacy

development. As Simon & Campano (2013) write, we must understand and utilize students’ unique constellations of abilities, strengths, interests, and needs as we consider creating engaging and meaningful literacy environments to help all students thrive in and out of our classrooms. As we are compiling and editing this handbook, Kathy was reminded of a conversation with a colleague about “rainbow writing,” a literacy activity her colleague’s son (we’ll call him Owen) felt tortured by in his kindergarten classroom due to the repetitive and boring tracing and retracing of high-frequency words. For Owen, building words in shaving cream, in sand, using magnetic letters, or with letter stamps would have been a more engaging and more beneficial way to develop his high-frequency word vocabulary— what Marie Clay (1991) calls “islands of certainty,” essential for emerging readers. However, for Kathy’s own daughter, rainbow writing was a joyful activity; she loved to draw and fine motor tasks came easily to her. Thus, we urge you to consider your own students’ unique constellations— their interests, abilities, strengths, and areas of instructional need— when perusing this online resource.

How was this Book Created?

Many of our graduate students are currently teachers working in elementary or other classrooms. As part of one of their scenario-based projects in their B-6 literacy materials and methods class, we co-created a non-disposable assignment where our students created descriptions and examples of their favorite research-based literacy activities that serve as the basis of this Open Educational Resource (OER) via SUNY Pressbooks. These activities have been lightly edited and we have ensured that they are aligned to the New York State Big Six Skills and Competencies (comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, oral language, phonics, phonological awareness).

We view the Literacy Big Six Handbook as living document that will continue to undergo changes and improvements and we further develop our collaboration with our graduate students.

Why this OER?

In spring of 2024, NYSED (2024) released a series of literacy briefs to add to the contentious conversation regarding phonics and literacy instruction. These “Science of Reading” briefs expanded what counts as effective literacy instruction and moved beyond merely positioning literacy as focusing solely on the scholarship of cognitive scientists and instead considers all literacy research including research by literacy scholars. While big publishers are available with expensive, canned curriculum, many teachers desire free and innovative resources that will help them both understand effective literacy teaching practices aligned with New York State’s vision as well envision how to apply these strategies to their work with unique learners in classrooms across New York State. As an institution that creates certified teachers, we felt it is our

responsibility to create an Open Educational Resource that would meet this need.

References

Clay, M.M. (1991). *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishers.

New York State Department of Education. (2024). Literacy initiative. <https://www.nysed.gov/standards-instruction/literacy-initiative>

Simon, R. & Campano, G. (2013). Activist literacies: Teacher research as resistance to the “normal curve.” *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 9(1), 21-39. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1008171.pdf>

SKILL/COMPETENCY I

COMPREHENSION

While assessing comprehension is common place in many elementary classrooms, actually teaching techniques that support comprehension is much less common (Gill, 2011). In this section, teachers have shared activities and techniques to use with students to support building reading comprehension not just assessing it.

What is Comprehension?

According to Lesaux and Carr (2024, p.3), comprehension can be described as “the complex process and ultimate goal of reading that involves constructing meaning from and interpreting texts.”

We hope you’ll find many engaging ideas to support comprehension in your elementary classroom.

I. Story Pyramid

MADISON LONG

Strategy Overview:

- Story pyramids allow for students to dive deeper with texts and breakdown information into specific sections to analyze.
- This strategy allows for students to not only grow in their reading literacy development, but also in their communication and self confidence abilities.
- Students are to depict certain components of the content to relate back in how these elements are integrated within the story.
- The benefits of this activity include “reading comprehension, vocabulary building, critical thinking, engagement with texts, summarization, analytical skills, support learning for students with disabilities, positive classroom environment”

Strategy in Action

A story pyramid activity allows for students to breakdown specific elements of a story and analyze how the components are intertwined. Story pyramids are a fun way for students to be creative in their writing expressions and expand on their comprehension of the material and content of the text.

Student Example

1. Students read a content specific story.
2. After reading the text, students can interact with the key elements of a story like characters, plot, setting, and conflict.
3. Students then can begin to work on the story pyramid and fill in missing essential information that they gathered from the text.

Related Resources

- [ReadingQuest Strategies](#)

2. Character Interview

MATTHEW MALERBA

Strategy Overview

- Pushes students to think critically and use their imagination to truly play the role of a given character.
- The most important part of this activity is that it gets students thinking about their characters on a deeper level ([Apples and Bananas Education, 2018](#)).
- Develops comprehension of the text and overall details of the story as students must actively engage in the material and look through the lens of a specific character.
- Students are able to strengthen their communication skills, especially their interviewing/questioning skills.

Strategy in Action

Prior to reading, the teacher will let students know about this character interview activity and will allow students to pick a character of significance from a story/book they are reading as a class. Students will then read and engage in the material while also keeping this character in mind. When finished reading, the teacher will pair students up for their interviews. Students will have time to then come up with questions to ask their fellow “character” and also prepare themselves for any answers they may be asked. One at a

time, students will play the role of their chosen character and ask their partner questions, about a world view, a detail from the story, or anything that will push their partner to answer in the role of their character. Next, students will take turns asking and answering questions while also recording specific ideas and perspectives they may come across when conducting the interview.

Student Example

After completion of the reading, teacher groups students into pairs, then students have time to come up with questions to ask one another, once given enough time, Student 1 begins to question Student 2 as they assume the roles/personas of their characters. After each question, students have a few seconds to write down responses, at the end, students share their main findings.

References

Apples and Banana Education. (2018, February 3). *Character interview – A short story writing activity*. Applesandbananaseducation.com.
<https://applesandbananaseducation.com/character-interview-short-story-writing-activity/>

3. Topple Blocks Reading Game

CAROLINE MASSARO

Strategy Overview

- Topple Blocks (a twist on Jenga) is a reading game that will get students engaged and having fun, while practicing their reading and comprehension skills.
- This game works to build students' comprehension skills which is an essential part of the “NYS Big 6” skills & competencies. The act of understanding what you read and write is crucial for students to grasp at an elementary level.
- Teachers can use this game in the classroom as a reinforcer for reading comprehension skills. Because this is used as a game, students will play the game, a take on Jenga, and engage with a group of students.
- This game relates to research on the “Big 6” skills & competencies because it engages with “the complex process and ultimate goal of reading that involves constructing meaning from and interpreting texts” (Lesaux & Carr, 2024, p. 3).

Strategy in Action

The teacher would implement this game as either a center station or a fun Friday activity. A group of students would play the game like normal Jenga, except with a twist. The game is used after an interactive read aloud or reading a book club text. Open-ended text based questions are written on small post it that are stuck to some of the Jenga blocks. When a student pull out a Jenga block, they have to answer the question. This requires students to practice talking and thinking about texts. The goal of the game is still like Jenga, to not have the structure collapse, but it adds a layer of literacy practice as well!

Related References

Lesaux, N.K., Carr, K.C. (2024). [Brief 1: Science of reading: What is it?](#) New York State Education Department.

4. Exit Ticket

BROOKLYNN HILL

Strategy Overview

- This activity is used at the end of a lesson or class that teachers utilize to gain an understanding of their students' comprehension of the lesson. It is a short activity that does not need a tremendous amount of time for students to complete.
- This strategy is important to use in the classroom as it is a great tool for teachers to reflect on how well they communicated their content and ideas to each student, as well as for students to reflect on what they have learned. Reflection is very important for students to practice in new learning as repetition will help students gain a better understanding of content.
- According to the article, "Gaining Understanding of What Your Students Know", it states, "A good exit ticket can tell whether students have a superficial or in-depth understanding of the material. With this information, teachers can adjust instruction and plan how to best meet student needs by modifying and differentiating instruction. Exit tickets allow teachers to see where the gaps in knowledge are, what they need to fix, what students have mastered, and what can be enriched in the classroom" (Edutopia, 2015).

Strategy in Action

To perform this strategy in the classroom, first the teacher/ instructor must create a prompt or a couple of multiple-choice questions based on the lesson that was just taught. Once all of their materials have been put away from that lesson, students will only need a writing utensil or electronic device to answer the question. Once all of the exit tickets have been collected the teacher will review and divide the tickets into piles of students who understood the lesson, students who somewhat understood the lesson and students who did not understand the lesson. This will give the teacher an idea of how to move forward when continuing to build off of the specific content, strategy, or skills that were taught that day.

Related Resources

1. Edutopia – Person. (2015, June 23). Gaining understanding of what your students know. Edutopia.
<https://www.edutopia.org/practice/exit-tickets-checking-understanding>
2. Reading Rockets – Golembock, P., Woodson, J., & Bunting, E. (n.d.). Exit Slips. Reading Rockets.
<https://www.readingrockets.org/classroom/classroom-strategies/exit-slips>

5. True or False

NOELLE HALE

Strategy Overview

- This is a simple activity where a teacher will pose true or false questions after a shared reading to check for student comprehension of the information in the story.
- Comprehension can be difficult to measure and gauge, this strategy is one way to assess student retention and understanding of story materials.
- This activity can be used at the end of a shared independent or whole group text reading, this strategy is easier when the story is read with the whole class or a group of students so that the teacher is familiar with the material.
- Comprehension is the ability to give meaning to words and retain the message conveyed by an author (Lesaux & Carr, n.d., p. 3). Without comprehension the whole goal of literacy, which is to communicate and share ideas and knowledge is impossible because words would not carry any meaning.

Strategy in Action

I would begin by selecting a piece of text that is grade and content appropriate for my population. For example, if my class had just read the story *A Bad Case of the Stripes*, I would read the story all the way through using guiding questions and comments to keep the student's attention

during the reading. Then after the reading I will pose 3-4 true or false questions based on the text. Questions such as “Our main character goes to school after she got a case of the stripes?” or “The main character eats green beans to get rid of her stripes?” Students will either verbally state true or false if the statement happened in the story or not. Or they can hold a thumbs up or down to get rid of distraction from classmates.

Related Resources

[Reading comprehension activities for kids | Bedrock Learning](#)

6. 5 Finger Retell

SAMANTHA D'AMICO

Strategy Overview

- “The 5 Finger Retell” is a strategy used to help students summarize a text by picking out key details. Each finger represents an important story element (Ursino, 2022).
- Summarizing is important because it teaches students how to focus on the most important information that is necessary to comprehend the story (Meir, n.d.).
- “Research has found that retelling promotes comprehension and vocabulary development” (Kelley, n.d.) The “5 Finger Retell” is an engaging and hands-on way to help students master this skill.
- In the classroom, students can use the “5 Finger Retell” during independent reading or when summarizing a read aloud as a whole class.

Strategy in Action

To implement this strategy, the teacher should start by explicitly teaching and discussing each story element in isolation. Then, the teacher will model the “5 Finger Retell” to students using a class read aloud. Eventually, students will practice the “5 Finger Retell” using their knowledge

about each story element. Then, they can transfer this skill to use during their independent reading as a way to increase comprehension of texts. The goal is for students to internalize this skill overtime and use this strategy to summarize texts.

Video Example

https://youtube.com/watch?v=_V7EvaGOScQ%3Fsi%3Dy5FiXhZO7GBLFTz

Related Resources

- [The Five Finger Retell Strategy – The Blue Brain Teacher](#)
- [5 Finger Retell Worksheets | Teach Starter](#)

References

Kelley, S. (n.d.). *Retelling: An evidence-based literacy strategy*. Understood. https://www.understood.org/en/articles/how-to-teach-retelling#Understand:_Why_this_strategy_works

Meier, J. (n.d.). *Alternatives to oral retellings*. Reading Rockets. <https://www.readingrockets.org/blogs/sound-it-out/alternatives-oral-retellings>

Ursino, L. (2022, January 28). *5 finger retell*. 1st Grade Blog.

<https://www.thesummitprep.org/1st/2022/01/27/5-finger-retell/>

7. Beach Ball

SARAH SPINDLER

Strategy Overview:

- You will need a beach ball, a Sharpie, and a list of reading comprehension questions.
- Students take turns throwing the ball to their classmate. Whatever question or number their hand lands on or is closest to is the number they will answer.
- There are 2 options for this activity.
 - One option is to write numbers on the ball. The numbers will coordinate with the question numbers you write yourself (or that are found in the textbook). This gives you many options to use the ball for a variety of topics
 - The second option is to write general questions on the beach ball that can be used with any story, such as:
 - What is the setting?
 - Who is the main character?
 - Describe a character trait of one character?
 - What lesson can be learned from the story?
 - What happened in the beginning . . . the middle . . . and the end?

Strategy in Action

Teacher: Let's stand up and make a circle. Here is our Reading Beach Ball! These are the questions in all the colored stripes:

- What is the setting?
- Who is the main character?
- Describe a character trait of one character?
- What lesson can be learned from the story?
- What happened in the beginning
- What happened in the middle
- What happened in the end?

When your hand lands on a question, that is the question you will answer.

Teacher: throws the ball to a student

Student: *Reads "What lesson can be learned from The Lightning Thief"?* Student answers question

Student: Throws ball to another classmate in the circle

Related Resources

- [Comprehension Cubes and Beach Balls – Conversations in Literacy](#)

8. Think Aloud

TRISHA MILLIMAN

Strategy Overview

- Think aloud is where students verbalize their thoughts while reading.
- They allow the teacher to see which reading skills they've learned and which ones they still need to work on.
- Ask questions by actively engaging with text while reading.

Strategy in Action

As I read, I'll share my thoughts and ask prompt questions like, "I wonder why..." or "I think they are feeling like that because..." This will give students a clear idea of how to engage with the story. After that, they will read the book, and together we'll brainstorm questions about its topic to deepen their understanding of the book.

Student Example

1. The teacher reads from the book and ask questions like “I wonder why..” or “I think they are feeling like that because...” (I will model first)
2. The students then read from the book and I offer questions to help direct their thinking, such as: Can you explain what just happened? etc.
3. Students share their thoughts

9. Whisper Reading

TRISHA MILLIMAN

Strategy Overview:

- Whisper reading is a method where students read quietly to themselves to get feedback.
- So, students can correct their pronunciation of the words they are reading.
- Allows students to achieve better comprehension as they go at their own pace.

Strategy in Action

Today, we will be reading quietly aloud and listening to ourselves to improve our understanding of challenging words, this allows you to read at your own pace.

Student Example

1. The teacher explains to read in a whisper voice to

themselves.

2. Students whisper aloud to themselves, allowing them to hear their mistakes and correct their fluency.

10. Flow Charts

COURTNEY DENMARK

Strategy Overview:

- A subset of story mapping, flow charts show how the elements of a story work together. The setting and the characters lead to the problem, which leads to the important events, which leads to the outcome.
- It is important because students need to understand how things work together within the texts that they are reading.
- Flow charts can be used in the classroom before, during, and after reading. They can be pre-taught to allow students to have a guide of what they are looking for while reading. This can increase comprehension skills because students are able to essentially pre-read important aspects of the text. Comprehension success increases when students know what they are looking for.

Strategy in Action

Students will be given a flow chart that goes along with a story selected for their reading time that day (either a read aloud, small group reading, or independent reading). As students are listening to/reading the text, they will fill out the flowchart. Once the story is completed, students will get in small groups and share what their understandings of

the story. they got out of the story.

Related Resources:

Geva, E. (1983). Facilitating reading comprehension through flowcharting. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 18, 384-405.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/747375>

II. Hexagonal Thinking

ELIZABETH BAROODY-SOLOMON

Strategy Overview:

- A wonderful method for pondering the connections between ideas, vocabulary words or characters
- Helps to foster critical thinking and the interconnectedness of concepts
- Useful in any classroom, grades 3-12 and beyond

Strategy in Action

Once students are divided into small groups, each group receives a set of hexagonal cards in a deck. On those hexagons are written related thematic vocabulary or whatever concepts you choose. The idea is to have each group discuss together the possible connections between each set of hexagons. Each hexagon can potentially connect with up to six others. Students will arrange and rearrange the hexagons until they believe they have the strongest hexagonal web in place. Then, they will explain their thinking with connection arrows and a written template the instructor provides.

Video Example

[https://youtube.com/
watch?v=c88LmOC86D8%3Fsi%3D7YrugQLE9CCKNuH](https://youtube.com/watch?v=c88LmOC86D8%3Fsi%3D7YrugQLE9CCKNuH)

Related Resources:

- [Hexagonal Thinking: A Colorful Tool for Discussion | Cult of Pedagogy](#)

12. Tic-Tac-Tell

EMILY MAHANY

Strategy Overview:

- Tic-Tac-Tell is a game students can play to retell a story. It is a game board with 9 different talking points. Genre, Setting, Problem, Solution, Beginning, Middle, End, Characters, and Connection. Students take turns making X's and O's over the square and whichever one they pick they have to speak about.
- This is important because it gives students a chance to listen to what others are thinking as well as think about the story they read and pick out key information.
- This can be used in the classroom with any read aloud, partner reading, or students telling each other about the books they are reading individually.
- “When children retell a story, they practice using different tenses, expand their vocabulary, and learn to articulate their thoughts more effectively.” ([mightywritersblog, 2024](#))

Strategy in Action

After a read aloud, the students will pair up and get two different colored pencils or crayons. The students will decide who is X and who is O. Students will then take turns, placing their Xs and Os on the game board. Whichever box they mark they will need to speak on that.

For example, if they mark “Setting” they will need to speak about the story’s setting. The teacher will be circulating and checking for understanding. They will be checking in with partners and asking questions to check for understanding.

Related Resources

- [Retelling a Story Activities and Crafts](#)

13. Story Sequencing

ISABELLE RITZ

Strategy Overview

Story Sequencing is a strategy that students that supports text comprehension. Story sequencing is described as an “essential reading skill” where students understand the concept of chronological order through the use of a story. This helps them understand the structure of the text, how the text is organized, and how elements of a passage are related. Sequencing stories can be taught and used in the classroom through various graphic organizers that help students arrange the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Studies show “preliminary evidence that sequencing is an important skill for children’s comprehension of narrative texts and have implications for reading education and intervention programs” ([Gouldthorp et al., 2017](#)).

Strategy in Action

One strategy is to divide students into small groups. The teacher will hand out a passage that has been cut up by paragraph. Then the teacher will say, “I want you to read each paragraph and then as a group I want you to reassemble the story according to how you think it should go in chronological order.” Each group has a different story

and at the end each group can read out their stories to the class to see if they make sense.

Related Resources

- [How to Teach Sequencing in Reading and Writing: A Complete Guide](#)

References

Gouldthorp, B., Katsipis, L., & Mueller, C. (2017). An investigation of the role of sequencing in children's reading comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 53(1), 91–106. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.186>

14. TRAP

JANELLE SCOTT

Strategy Overview:

TRAP, a beneficial self-regulation skill to boost the success with comprehension for readers. TRAP (Sanders, 2020) stands for:

- **T**hink before reading
- **R**ead the paragraph
- **A**sk yourself what the paragraph is mostly about and what is the most important information
- **P**araphrase the paragraph

Strategy in Action

TRAP builds on comprehension because it allows students to pull out key components of a text by reminding them what they should be looking for as they are reading. TRAP, “is designed to increase reading comprehension of students through the identification of main ideas and the use of summarization” (Sanders, 2020). This is a key component to comprehension as once you can identify these key components of a text, you will be more successful in comprehending the text overall!

Step 1: Develop and activate background knowledge-

- Collect baseline data
- Develop necessary background knowledge and vocabulary

Step 2: Discuss it-

- Introduce mnemonic device/strategy
- Obtain student buy-in
- Begin developing goals/self-instruction statements

Step 3: Model It-

- Model the strategy
- Model metacognitive process (e.g., think aloud)
- Model use of self-regulation skills

Step 4: Memorize it-

- Memorize the mnemonic/strategy steps
- Memorize how to complete strategy steps
- Internalize self-instruction statements

Step 5: Support it-

- Collaboratively practice the strategy
- Provide immediate feedback on student performance
- Provide scaffolded support for strategy use; fade supports when students are ready
- Provide scaffolded support for self-regulation skills;

fade supports when students are ready

Step 6: Independent practice-

- Students master strategy
- Students independently use strategy
- Students independently use self-regulation skills
- Students generalize strategy

Teacher Tips:

- Be intentional when using this strategy. What do you want the students to learn from the material?
- Make sure students understand the purpose of using the TRAP method
- Model the method before assigning them to do it independently

References

Sanders, S. (2020). Using the self-regulated strategy development framework to teach reading comprehension strategies to elementary students with disabilities. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 43(1), 57-70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43494-020-00009-z>

Sanders, S., Hart Rollins, L., Michael, E., & Jolivet, K. (2021). "TRAP is legit!" Using self-regulated strategy development to teach reading comprehension in a residential treatment facility. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 66(1), 89-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988x.2021.1972921>

Sanders, S., Jolivet, K., Rollins, L. H., & Shaw, A. (2021). How to "TRAP" information: A reading comprehension strategy for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 53(6), 450-458. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059920981099>

15. Code a Text

JILLIAN OWENS

Strategy Overview

- This strategy teaches students how to annotate texts to improve their comprehension.
- Coding the text promotes student learning by encouraging a deeper engagement with the text ([CAST, 2020](#)).
- Students' memory of texts increases when they code texts ([CAST, 2020](#)).

Strategy in Action

To implement this strategy, the teacher needs to decide what features of the text will be important for students to look out for. For younger students, there should be only a few features that they should be looking for. The teacher will have to create corresponding symbols to go along with the text features they want their students to identify (see examples below for annotation symbols ideas). A visual (anchor chart, reference paper, bookmark, etc.) needs to be created to act as a key to explain the symbols and what they mean in the text. Coding the text will need to be modeled for the students and explicitly taught to them before they are able to use this skill. After it is modeled for them, students should begin to read their own texts and

search for places where they can code it. After reading, students should skim through the codes that they placed in the text to remind themselves of what they read. The codes can be used to guide discussions about the text.

Related Resources

- [Annotation Guidelines – English I – LibGuides at Loomis Chaffee School](#)

References

CAST. (2020, November 2). Annotation. CISL. <https://cisl.cast.org/research/annotation>

Loomis Chaffe. (n.d.). *English I: Annotation guidelines*. *Annotation guidelines – English I – LibGuides at Loomis Chaffee School*. <https://loomis.libguides.com/c.php?g=564994&p=8344030>

16. Roll & Chat

JULIANNE DARDIS

Strategy Overview

- Roll & Chat is a fun classroom activity that allows students to use hands on materials while engaging in meaningful conversations.
- Roll & Chat can be as easy or as complex as needed for students.
- After an independent read, a partner read, or a whole group read aloud, the students can work to roll dice to determine which questions they are answering.
- Questions can be answered orally to a peer or written down and handed in.
- This strategy is best suited for students grades 1-5. This strategy can be adapted for students of any level.

Strategy in Action

In the roll & chat strategy, students are given a worksheet, containing images of dice 1-6, and questions that correspond with each number on the dice. Students will begin this activity by completing a reading assignment, either individually, with a partner, in a small group, or as whole group instruction. Once the students have completed reading, have students gather their materials for

this activity. These may include the die, the corresponding worksheet, and a pencil and paper. Depending on which route you decide to go with this activity, students may work in pairs or individually. If students are working individually, have them write their answers on a separate worksheet. Students will be instructed and given an example of how to use this activity. They will begin with rolling the die and answering the question on the worksheet that corresponds with the number they have rolled. If students are working in pairs for this activity, then they are to take turns rolling the die and answering the questions. Melissa with The Reading Roundup tell us that, “Dice games allow students to respond to the text in a more engaging way!” ([Melissa, 2019](#)). This has been proved in all of the classrooms that I have worked in over the last few years. Students enjoy working with hands-on manipulatives because it gives the students a break from their typical reading and writing and gives them a chance to have meaningful, academic conversations with their peers regarding what they have been reading. While the students are working on this activity, the teacher should be circulating around the classroom and checking in with students.

Related Resources

- [FREEBIE! Roll and Chat: Reading Comprehension Dice Game by Playful in Primary](#)

References

Melissa. (2019, February 24). *Simple activity using dice to teach story elements*. The Reading Roundup. <https://thereadingroundup.com/rollaretell/>

17. Visualizing

LAURA BYRD

Strategy Overview

Visualizing is when students create mental images during and after reading (Keene & Zimmerman, 2013). When students are able to visualize, they are able to gain a deeper understanding of the text and commit information to memory.

Strategy in Action

Visualizing requires students to use their prior knowledge, text evidence, and creativity to formulate a mental image of what is happening in the text they are reading ([Janine, 2020](#)). Checking in with students as they read and sketch their thoughts and ideas can build their visualizing skills. Note: This skill can be difficult and takes a lot of practice!

Student Example

As a whole group, read a descriptive, fictional passage and encourage students to close their eyes. As you read, students should focus on what they think the setting and characters look like.

Related Resources

- [How to Teach Reading: Visualizing for Better Comprehension](#)

References

Jeanine. (2021, October). Visualizing reading strategy lesson ideas and activities. *Think Grow Giggle*. <http://www.thinkgrowgiggle.com/2020/10/visualizing-reading-strategy-lesson.html>

Keene, E. O., & Zimmermann, S. (2013). Years later, comprehension strategies still at work. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(8), 601–606. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1167>

SKILL/COMPETENCY II

VOCABULARY

“Vocabulary is a student’s internal dictionary. (I)t is comprised of words and their meanings” (Lesaux and Carr, 2024, p.3).

18. Post-it Stations

CAROLINE MASSARO

Strategy Overview

- Post-it Stations is an activity for students to practice their vocabulary skills.
- This activity is important in aiding in vocabulary development by providing students with vocabulary words and forming sentences based on those words.
- Post-it notes can be scattered around the room with vocabulary words, that connect to a unit in the curriculum. Students circulate the room writing sentences with the words they find.
- This strategy relates to the “Big 6” skills & competencies as it is discussed that vocabulary development highlights “a student’s internal dictionary, it is comprised of words and their meanings” (NYSED, Brief 1, p.3).

Strategy in Action

The teacher will stick post-its around the classroom with different vocabulary words written on them. The students will circulate the classroom, either individually, in pairs, or groups, and write sentences using the words they find on the post-it notes. By doing so, students are building on

their vocabulary skills and thinking of ways to use words in a sentence. After the students circulate the entire classroom and write sentences for all the vocabulary words, the teacher will review their sentences as a whole group and write them down on an anchor chart for later review!

Related Resources

Lesaux, N.K., Carr, K.C. (2024). [Brief 1: Science of reading: What is it?](#) New York State Education Department.

19. Vocab of the Day

MATTHEW MALERBA

Strategy Overview

- Students are presented with a new vocabulary word every day that reflects cultures of students in the classroom and also presents itself in the material for that class
- Vocabulary matters because readers can't fully understand texts without knowing the meaning of the words within the text. In other words, textual meaning is constructed on building blocks of vocabulary ([Rasinski, 2021](#)).
- Students are introduced to many new words that will help expand their literacy comprehension and reading skills
- The more words a reader knows, the greater the likelihood that the reader will understand a text ([Rasinski, 2021](#)).

Strategy in Action

The teacher will present a new word on board each day and that will be the vocabulary word for the day. Students will have a brief discussion prior to the definition being posted, about if anyone has seen or heard of this word before, and if anyone knows anything about the word already. The teacher will then post the word along with its definition on the board for students to take it in initially.

After reading its definition, students will discuss how they think this word will play a role in the lesson or how it already has played a role in prior lessons. The teacher will offer a hint to students to activate their intrinsic motivation but not give away the very idea of the word.

Student Example

Teacher posts word on the board for all to see, next students lead discussion on prior knowledge of this word, next the teacher portrays the meaning of this new word, students then predict how this word will be implemented into the class, finally the teacher will give students a guiding hint as to how this word will be relevant.

References

Rasinski, T. (2021, March 4). *Why vocabulary matters*. Learning A-Z. <https://www.learninga-z.com/site/resources/breakroom-blog/why-vocabulary-matters>

20. Vocabulary Snowball

MADISON LONG

Strategy Overview

- Vocabulary snowball is a wonderful way to incorporate students enhancement of their vocabulary terms and communication skills with peers in their class.
- The benefits of this activity include divergent thinking, cooperative and collaborative learning, peer learning, problem solving, reflective analysis
- This activity can increase student conversation in their learning, while also promoting retention of students comprehension for vocabulary terms.

Strategy in Action

Vocabulary Snowball is an activity that involves students participating together in not only enhancing their vocabulary words, but also having fun in a snowball fight. Students will each have a vocabulary word and definition written on separate sheets of paper. Students will then crumple their papers like snowballs and throw them into a center pile. From there, students will go into the middle, grab a snowball, and then have to converse and interact with each other to find their matching term and definition.

Student Example

1. Students write vocabulary words and definitions on separate sheets of paper.
2. Students crumple their papers into snowball like shapes, which they then throw their snowballs in the middle of the room to mix them up.
3. Students find a snowball and then have to communicate with each other in order to find its matching definition or term.
4. Activity can repeat for students to have the opportunity to engage with a variety of words.

Related Resources

- [Vocabulary Strategy: Snowball Fight by Stephanie Wrona on Prezi](#)

21. Word Wall

BROOKLYNN HILL

Strategy Overview

- A word wall is a big section of your classroom completely dedicated to vocabulary words as they come up throughout the year. Each new vocabulary word will get added along with an image representing the word to help students remember the meaning.
- In the article, “Using Word Walls to Develop and Maintain Academic Vocabulary” it states that word walls, “... give students constant access to the important content vocabulary for the class. Pointing out to students that key words are always available to them helps promote independence and reinforces the importance of these words in the classroom” (Filkins). Scott Filkins, the author, also states “As the collection of words grows, invite students to find new ways to arrange them—by linguistic features (same initial letter, rhymes, root families), by synonyms or antonyms, by topical relationships, and so forth” (Filkins).
- At the beginning of the school year, you will need to create a large space in your classroom that will be seen by the students throughout the entire school year. For each new unit, you will need to label a new space on the wall where you will add new vocabulary words. Once a word is added to the wall, the teacher will go over it with the students. Talk about its meaning, how it can be used, where you should use it in your own work etc.. Once a vocabulary word is added to the wall, it must stay up and visible to students for the rest of the school year. This is so students can refer back to that word even when

the unit that it is used for may be concluded.

Strategy in Action

To use this strategy in the classroom, teachers are using visual learning to help students remember their vocabulary words. At the beginning of a new unit, students will be asked to learn new vocabulary words. When introducing these words, students should define the word and associate the word with something that will help them remember the definition of the word. Once students have been able to understand what that word means, it will go up on the word wall. This word will remain on the wall visibly accessible to students throughout the year to refer back to. As the unit continues, make sure that teachers refer back to the words on the wall to remind students of their vocabulary words and how they are to use them during lessons, within content, and learning to use those words in their everyday language. Once students know the words and have been using the words correctly, teachers can use the word wall to connect the old words another way besides their units. For example, do any of the words share the same beginning or ending of the words. Do they rhyme? Refer back to the wall to help students develop their understanding of the word but also their understanding of literacy skills.

References

1. Filkins, S. (n.d.). Using word walls to develop and maintain academic vocabulary. *Read Write Think*.
<https://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/using-word-walls-develop>
2. Bafadal, M. F., & Humaira, H. (2019). The use of charades games in teaching vocabulary to the junior high school students. *Linguistics and ELT Journal*, 5(1), 14-21. <https://doi.org/10.31764/leltj.v1i2.748>

22. Highlight Reading

NOELLE HALE

Strategy Overview

Vocabulary is a student’s “internal dictionary” (Lesaux & Carr, n.d., p. 3). When a student has a large bank of vocabulary words to pull from students will be able to utilize them for background knowledge and in writing activities.

- As a small group, students will read a text together, this can be independent reading or aloud. Students will highlight new vocabulary words while they are reading. Then after reading the whole group will review these words and then reread after each new vocabulary word has been defined. This works best with a text with intentional, new vocabulary words.
- Students can learn multiple vocabulary words which increases their comprehension and background knowledge.
- This activity is best in a small group so that a discussion about each new vocabulary word can be fostered without too much input.

Strategy in Action

As the teacher I would create a text about planets that would coincide with a science unit about solar systems and

space. The text does not have to connect with another subject but it is a good idea for vocabulary incorporation across subjects. I would read the text aloud all the way through. Before reading I would give each student a highlighter and tell them to listen to my reading, follow along, and highlight words that they are unfamiliar with. Then after the reading we would as a group go through the text, students will discuss the words they have highlighted, I will define them, and then students will create a small image that connects to the definition for the word. Students can also use each word in their own way in a sentence to demonstrate understanding of each new word. Then we will reread the text after with the new vocabulary knowledge.

Related Resources

- [21 Fun Vocabulary Activities for Kids](#)

References

Lesaux, N. K. & Carr, K. C. (n.d.) *Science of reading: what is it?* New York State Education Department.

23. Interactive Movement with Vocabulary

OLIVIA CAPITANO

Strategy Overview

For this lesson, students will connect movements to new vocabulary words.

Strategy in Action

During their life cycle unit in science, the teacher will demonstrate the word “grow” by acting like a tiny seed (curled up tight close to the ground). Then, as we add water and sunlight to our seed, the seed sprouts (we can extend an arm out of our seed)! Slowly our plant will start to grow into the mature adult phase (stand up nice and tall with both arms up in the sky, like a flower). These movements will help students to conceptualize the meaning of growth.

Video Examples:

https://youtube.com/watch?v=38JeYKqOZ_g%3Fsi%3DPGkEfm-E1CUHgBOO

[https://youtube.com/
watch?v=AlGVof_tKOE%3Fsi%3DBhjYG7MVfybG1Ah2](https://youtube.com/watch?v=AlGVof_tKOE%3Fsi%3DBhjYG7MVfybG1Ah2)

24. Vocabulary Four-Square

SAMANTHA D'AMICO

Strategy Overview

- Vocabulary Four-Square originated from the “Frayer Model”, which is a graphic organizer that helps deepen students’ understanding of key vocabulary (CTL, 2024). Vocabulary Four-Square is a similar model that uses alternative categories to support students.
- This strategy is effective because it helps students to understand the vocabulary at a deeper level by interacting with the word in different contexts.
- “The Four-Square lessons reflect a research-based paradigm, which incorporates interactive directed instruction followed by a meaningful and relevant period of practice and application” (Brunn, 2002).

Strategy in Action

It is recommended that the teacher pre-selects vocabulary from current units or texts. The teacher should model how to use the graphic organizer and gradually release responsibility to the students. It should be emphasized that everyone’s answer will be a little different and that is what is expected based on their interpretation

of the word. The Four-Square organizer can be differentiated based on grade-level.

Video Example

https://youtube.com/watch?v=8fVCbCx9EZs%3Fsi%3D5tP_K2MrL4CO6kCq

Related Resources

- [Vocabulary Graphic Organizers – The Homeschool Daily](#)
- [Vocabulary Four Square – Book Creator app](#)

References

Brunn, M. (2002). The four-square strategy. (Teaching Ideas). *The Reading Teacher*, 55(6), 522-525. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20205093>

Collaborative for Teaching and Learning. (2024, August 21). [Framer model & Four-Square Adaptation](#). Collaborative for Teaching and Learning. <https://ctlonline.org/vocab-graphic-organizers/>

25. Vocabulary Charades

SARAH SPINDLER

Strategy Overview

- This is a kinesthetic activity that puts students into teams. They take turns silently acting out vocabulary words for their classmates to guess.
- This helps students build a good vocabulary. It also encourages collaboration and aids language acquisition for any multilingual learners in your class.
- Teachers can use this to review new vocabulary during the literacy block, or to review any new content-specific vocabulary (Bolen, 2023).
- According to Compton, (n.d) vocabulary “enhances reading comprehension by giving readers the capability not only to recognize words, but also to understand their meanings within a text.” (Compton). If students do not know the meanings of the words they encounter, it will be difficult to comprehend what they are reading. It will only get worse as they grow older.

Strategy in Action

Students have been learning about food, and there is much new vocabulary to learn. Drilling them while they try and sit still is nearly impossible, so breaking them into

teams and letting them move, play and laugh is a great way to learn and have some fun. After reading *Dragons Love Tacos* in the read-aloud, make a list of words we learned, put them in a bowl, and have groups take turns pulling out a word to act out.

Teacher: My friends, we just learned lots of food words. Now we are going to play a game to see how well we know our new words. Let's count off by 4s to make groups

Students: count off by 4's, stand with group members

Teacher: group 1, come take a piece of paper from Ms. S's bowl. Group 1, without talking or making noise, you are going to act out this word. Groups 2,3, and 4, you are going to guess the word. Whoever guesses correct first gets a point.

Group 1: acts out jalapeño.

Possible Charades words:

1. Spicy
2. Jalapeno
3. Chicken
4. Beef
5. Cheese
6. Tomato

Related Resources

- Here is a very detailed procedure for Vocabulary Charades: [charades-esl-game](#)
- This website also has some great lists of charades words, as well as lists of words and definitions: [Charades Words for You](#)

[to Act It Out - ESLBUZZ](#) (Bolen, 2023)

26. Word Association

CATHERINE MOEN

Strategy Overview

- Word association is a fun activity that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms to support students' vocabulary development. Teachers can model this game in many ways depending on what they are trying to focus on with their students.
- This activity is important because it allows students to share their vocabulary as well as learn new vocabulary words from their peers in the class.
- Word association can be used in the classroom during literacy block as a fun and engaging activity. Teachers can provide students with a word to start with and allow them to play from there. It opens the door for learning and sharing among students.
- “Word association games are a fantastic way to help students practice using their existing vocabulary and learn new English words” ([Five Fun Word Association Games](#)).

Strategy in Action

The teacher will have the students sit together either in a circle on the floor or at their seats. The teacher will then

explain the game to the students. The teacher will tell the students that they will say a word and the first person will share the word that comes to their mind when they hear the word. For example, if the teacher starts by saying the word “game” the first student may say something like “win”. From there, each student will share a word based on the one they heard before. The teacher can intervene at any point to ask a student to share what their word means if it’s a word that other students may not know. Once all students have had a chance to share, the teacher can repeat the activity with a new word or have students play again with a partner or a small group so that students can practice more with their vocabulary.

Student Example

After participating in the whole group activity, a small group of students played word association on their own based on the text they were reading in class. The teacher provided the first word for the group, “rainforest”, since this was what their text was about. From there all students shared words.

Student 1: “Trees”

Student 2: “Canopy”

Student 3: “Can you give the definition of canopy?”

Student 2: “Of course. The canopy is an upper, dense

layer of trees in the rainforest. It is where most of the wildlife lives in the rainforest.

Student 2: “Thanks for sharing”

Student 3: “You’re welcome”

The students then resume the game, repeating the process as necessary.

Related Resources

- [Five Fun Word Association Games | Games4esl](#)

27. Password

ELIZABETH BAROODY-SOLOMON

Strategy Overview:

- Fun and easy way to review vocabulary together
- Builds student engagement—students are paired and take turns defining and guessing
- Can be used during literacy block or any vocabulary-centered activity
- Great way to practice vocabulary which is fundamental to reading and reading comprehension

Strategy in Action

Place a list of 5-6 vocabulary terms on the board, after pairing students so that one student is facing the board and the other the opposing wall. The student facing the board will describe/circumlocute the word until the student facing the opposing wall is able to guess it. Students switch and tackle another round of words, changing roles.

Related Resources:

- [Basics: Vocabulary | Reading Rockets](#)

28. Game-Based Learning

COURTNEY DENMARK

Strategy Overview:

- Game-based learning is a strategy in which academic concepts are taught and reviewed in an interactive way.
- This can be digital (Kahoot, Gynzy, WordWall, etc.) or non-digital (board games, puzzles, card games), and has been proven to be beneficial in early childhood education ([Alotaibi 2024](#)).
- This strategy is important because it shows that learning can be more than just sitting in a classroom and listening to a teacher lecture. Game-based learning allows for students to have a little bit more fun while they learn and practice their skills.
- Educational game-based learning promotes cognitive development, and not only does it help students learn vocabulary skills, it helps them develop problem-solving skills, memory, attention, and processing speed ([Alotaibi 2024](#)).
- Game-based learning also increases motivation and engagement to learn in our students. There are a lot of times in which typical instruction and skill practice is considered to be dry and boring, but including game-based learning allows for students to do something different and change it up ([Alotaibi 2024](#)).

Strategy in Action

One way that this can be used in the classroom is by creating a Kahoot game that reviews the vocabulary for a particular unit. The Kahoot game can be done before and after learning. Initially, it can be used as a way to gauge students' prior knowledge, and it can be used afterward as a way to see what they have learned.

Related Resources:

Alotaibi M. S. (2024). Game-based learning in early childhood education: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1307881. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1307881>

29. Bear Hunt

EMILY MAHANY

Strategy Overview

- Bear Hunt is an engaging way to get students moving around the classroom to discover their new vocabulary words. This activity encourages students to use vocabulary words in a sentence based on what they think theory means.
- This strategy is important because it helps to improve fluency when students are reading the new text. Familiarizing themselves with the words allows them to not stumble over them when they are seeing them again in the text.
- This can be used for each unit that has new vocabulary words.
- The bear hunt has been shown to help learners who learn better with a more hands on approach. "...activity requires students to physically move around the room, it can be especially engaging to kinesthetic learners." ([Facing History and Ourselves, 2017](#))

Strategy in Action

All students are given a piece of paper and a pencil. They search for the bears around the room that have a new vocabulary word attached to them. The first attempt with the word is what they think the word means. The second attempt with the word comes after we come back as a

group, go over each vocabulary word and read the story corresponding with the words. Students then pick 7 out of 10 of their vocabulary words to write sentences, demonstrating that they understand the meaning of the word. This practices Vocabulary, Fluency and comprehension.

Video Examples

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHHj4UIr_HA
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0bvukdP68Y>

Related Resources

- [Gallery Walk Teaching Strategy | Facing History & Ourselves](#)

30. Semantic Map

ISABELLE RITZ

Strategy Overview

A semantic map is a graphic organizer that helps students build prior knowledge around a word that they do not know the meaning of. Students will write words that are synonyms, antonyms, or words related to the topic. This graphic provides a visual representation of the connections between different words. This is important because it helps activate background knowledge and scaffold vocabulary words into a student's mental word bank. This improves students' understanding of words, their reading comprehension, and can facilitate strong collaborative discussion among students. Teachers can use a semantic map anytime they are trying to show the relationship between familiar and unfamiliar words. Research shows that semantic maps are, "effective with discussion and when it is used before reading a text. Word learning requires multiple exposures to the word within meaningful contexts (Judy Zorfass., n.d.)." Semantic maps are an effective activity for students to participate in before or after reading to help deepen understanding of a text. Semantic maps can be manipulated to include the definition of the word in the organizer. Furthermore, this a great group activity that students can create on chart paper. In research "semantic mapping... has been recommended for both special education and regular classroom teachers as a study skill strategy and a way to improve the comprehension of reading materials of all kinds" ([Schewel, 1989](#)).

Strategy in Action

Teacher will read a text to the class. Then the teacher will highlight a word from the reading that is unfamiliar to students and is a focus word of the unit or lesson that will help them to deepen their understanding of the content. Teacher will pass out a blank map. For example, if students are learning about transportation, the teacher will prompt students, “Scholars please write the word transportation inside of your center circle.” Then teacher will say, “Scholars, I want you to write words in the smaller circles around the bigger circle, of different forms of transportation that you see in your everyday life.” “Remember transportation is the movement of people, animals, or goods from one place to another! I want to see which scholar can connect our word transportation to the everyday systems we see!”

Related Resources

- [Connecting Word Meanings Through Semantic Mapping | Reading Rockets](#)

References

Schewel, R. (1989). Semantic mapping. *Academic Therapy*, 24(4), 439-447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105345128902400407>

3I. Vocabulary Checkers

JANELLE SCOTT

Strategy Overview

Vocabulary checkers is exactly what it sounds like— the fun game we all play with an academic twist. This game can be competitive and is very engaging. It works by taping each new vocabulary word on a set of checkers. Play Vocabulary checkers the same as regular checkers, with one exception. When one player is in position to make a jump, he or she must give the meaning of the word attached to the opponent's checker. If the player is successful, the opponent's checker may be jumped and taken. If an incorrect response is made, the opponent is allowed to remove the checker of the player making the incorrect response. The competing players are responsible for reaching agreement regarding the accessibility of responses" (Gauthier, 1991). Checkered word fun is the same as vocabulary fun and this resource is great for an initial understanding of the strategy and what skill it builds but it can be changed and adapted to the times we are currently in with different spins on it and different tricks to keep the game engaging.

Strategy in Action:

In a classroom full of students with all different literacy abilities this game (and other games) can be a great way to utilize effective literacy centers Students are much more

eager to participate in something if they find enjoyment in doing so. Vocabulary development is an essential component in comprehension instruction. The more words students know, the better the chances they will comprehend what they read.

Student Example (from Goodwin, 2018)

Student Example:

- Group students into pairs.
- Give each set of students a copy of this [printable checkerboard](#):
- Students should write a vocabulary word in white space available in each square.
- As students play through a game of checkers, ask them to provide the correct definition of the word in the square they want to move their piece to.
- Another option could also be having the student use the vocabulary word in a sentence.
- If the student correctly defines the word or uses it in context, they get to claim that square.

Teacher Tips:

- Encourage students to define the words in multiple different ways including the synonyms, comparisons, real-life examples, acting it out, etc. Allowing children

to do this with allow them to connect and retain to the words they are learning more.

- Emphasize the importance of connections among words
- Promote the use of them new vocab words
- Often review the words to keep them fresh in the kids' minds, whether that be sporadically asking a kid to use a new vocab word or to define a new vocab word they have learned

References

Gauthier, L. R. (1991). Checkered word fun. *The Reading Teacher*, 44(6), 447-447.

Goodwin, J. (2018, December 27). 9 Classroom vocabulary games to use with your students. Magoosh. <https://schools.magoosh.com/schools-blog/9-classroom-vocabulary-games-to-use-with-your-students>

32. Semantic Feature Analysis Chart

JILLIAN OWENS

Strategy Overview

- A semantic feature analysis chart is a vocabulary tool that students can use to compare the characteristics of vocabulary words.
- This could be especially useful for reading nonfiction texts.
- This strategy builds vocabulary and background knowledge by helping students compare and contrast the meanings of related words and concepts ([Jenkins & Davies, n.d.](#)).

Strategy in Action

Students will pick a topic and fill this into the heading in the left column (example: cloud types). The student will fill in words related to this topic underneath the heading. In the headings of the columns to the right, the student will list common features shared by some of the words that they listed. The student will focus on one word at a time and mark a + if the word shares the feature in the column or - if the word does not share the feature. The student will look over their chart when it is completed and discuss the relationship between the words and the features.

Related Resources:

- [LDAO-Oral-Language-Toolkit_FINALFINAL.pdf \(ldatschool.ca\)](#)
- [Semantic Feature Analysis | Reading Rockets](#)
- [Supporting oral language in the classroom: Educator ... LD@school](#)

References

Jenkins, S., & Davies, N. (n.d.). *Semantic feature analysis*. Reading Rockets. <https://www.readingrockets.org/classroom/classroom-strategies/semantic-feature-analysis>

33. Short Stories

JULIANNE DARDIS

Strategy Overview

- Vocabulary short stories are a creative and fun way for students to utilize a wide range of vocabulary while also expressing their creativity in writing.
- “Short stories are effective in enhancing vocabulary learning, making them valuable for language learners,” ([Asayh & Diyah, 2026](#)).
- Vocabulary short stories give students a way to use their newly learned vocabulary words in the form of expressive writing. Students will be given a list of vocabulary words and be asked to use them in writing a short story.
- Vocabulary short stories can be themed for the lesson/module.
- This strategy is best suited for students grades 1-5. This strategy can be adapted for students of any level.

Strategy in Action

In the classroom, students learn new vocabulary words starting in kindergarten and throughout their whole life. With this, students are asked and required to utilize these new terms and phrases in the form of reading, writing, and speaking. “Writing allows children to express their thoughts, creativity, and uniqueness. It is a fundamental way in which children learn to think critically, organize and

communicate ideas, and make thinking visible and permanent,” ([Writing Activities for Your First Grader | Reading Rockets, n.d.](#)). When considering using this strategy in the classroom, think about your class first. What improvements are needed in terms of writing? What vocabulary words is the curriculum asking to be taught at this time? What are some vocabulary words you have noticed the students may need reinforcing on their meaning? Once you have considered that, continue with the planning for this lesson. When introducing this strategy into the classroom, ensure that students are aware of their writing expectations for this piece. This can include spelling, capital letters, punctuation, spacing, use of high-frequency words, and length of writing. Also, review the vocabulary words prior to giving the worksheet and allow students to develop an understanding of the word. This activity can be done after whole-group reading, once the students have gained an understanding of the vocabulary words, when the students are in ELA small groups. When it comes time to utilize this resource, classroom procedures may be as follows: first, begin with introduction or reinforcement of key vocabulary for the lesson. Review with students and provide real-time examples to ensure understanding of material. Next, set the scene for the students. Give the group a theme, a message, or give full creative freedom in their story. Some examples of a theme may be what did you do this weekend? Or write about your favorite movie character. Or make up a story including your favorite animal. With these themes and more, students will understand their story expectations and be ready to write. Next you want to allow the students time to brainstorm. Let the students have the chance to think about what they want to write about and allow them to come up with multiple ideas and ask them to pick their favorite one that

they know they can write a lot about. Once they are ready, allow the students to begin writing and remind the students to use their vocabulary words and remind students of their set expectations when writing. Allow students to be creative while writing and express their message.

Related Resources

- [Vocabulary Activities – Vocab Short Stories – Lucky Little Learners](#)
- [Storytelling with vocabulary | Thinkcerca](#)

References

Asayh, N. M. A. & Diyah, A. A. A. (2026). The effectiveness of using short stories in learning english vocabulary among libyan EFL learners at the college of education – Zawia University. *Journal of Comprehensive Sciences*, 10(38), 1893–1901. <https://doi.org/10.65405/w19hpx49>

Writing activities for your first grader. (n.d.). Reading Rockets. <https://www.readingrockets.org/literacy-home/reading-101-guide-parents/your-first-grader/writing-activities>

34. Fill in Picture Cards

LAURA BYRD

Strategy Overview

While in the preliminary stage of introducing vocabulary words, have students match the words to the definition that is supported with an image. This can be done as a game whole group or in pairs.

Strategy in Action

Print out one copy of the vocabulary word list and places photos of the word with the definition around the room. Have students work together to match the photo with the word. Providing visuals promotes word identification and associations to definitions.

Student Example

This activity can be used for students in primary years up to high school. Have students work in pairs using pictures

and definitions to find matches. Have students collaborate with other groups to share their thinking.

Related Resources

- [SCHOOL Vocabulary Activity – Word to Picture Match](#)

SKILL/COMPETENCY III

ORAL LANGUAGE

According to Lesaux and Carr (2024) oral language “includes speaking and listening and provides the foundation for written language” (p. 3). We hope you’ll bring back some old favorite classroom activities like Show and Tell as well as incorporate some new ideas shared by our graduate students.

35. Classroom Debate

MATTHEW MALERBA

Strategy Overview

- Students are split up into two groups with opposing viewpoints and given a topic of discussion. Then they must respectfully argue their case to each other.
- It is important because students must orally express their thoughts and listen to others; debates prepare students to be more comfortable engaging in dialogue related to their beliefs as well as their areas of study ([NIUCTL, 2012](#)).
- By having students discuss and organize their points of view for one side of an argument they are able to discover new information and put knowledge into action ([NIUCTL, 2012](#))

Strategy in Action

Students are asked the question “Do students need recess?” on the board and are told their respective viewpoints... “Okay everyone, before you come up with your own ideas, Side 1 you are given ‘students needing recess’, and Side 2, you are given ‘students not needing recess’ and I will give you 1 minute to think about this question with your view in mind.”

Then students are able to have a respectful argumentative conversation amongst each other as they push for their perspective.

Student Example

First: Teacher provides a prompt (i.e. “Do students need recess?”)

Second: Group 1 states their case

Third: Group 2 Responds while stating their case

Fourth: Both groups engage in back and forth, civil argument

Related Resources

- [74 Interesting Debate Topics for Kids of All Ages & Grades](#)

References

Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning. (2012). *Classroom debates*. <https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/instructional-guide/classroom-debates.shtml>

36. Guess Who

MADISON LONG

Strategy Overview

- Guess Who integrated into a classroom setting allows for students to enhance on their communication skills, while also expanding their comprehension and critical thinking skills. Students work together to determine their character that they have chosen for the activity.
- The benefits of this activity are essential in the overall support of students in their academic learning and progression in literacy development.
- Some benefits of this activity include “Identify details from a text, learn how to form a question, good listening skills when their peer is asking a question, and work as a team to come up with a solution” ([A classroom game-guess who, 2017](#)).

Strategy in Action

For an instructional incorporation, educators can have students interact with characters from texts that they are reading in class. This allows for students to understand more about the content they are reading, while also being engaged and learning in a fun and communicative manner. This activity can be incorporated into various content areas

to expand on engagement with the content and further understanding of the material.

Student Example

1. Create Guess Who Boards that include characters from a class text
2. Students interact with one another describing various components of characters to guess each other's chosen role.

Related Resources

- [Make a Guess Who Game – Data Education in Schools](#)

References

A classroom game-guess who. (2017, December 16). <https://theteacherbin.com/a-classroom-game-guess-who/>

37. Guessing Game Riddles

CAROLINE MASSARO

Strategy Overview

- The guessing game riddles are a set of riddles to help students develop oral language skills, communication skills, and problem-solving.
- Students have an item with clues that they share with a partner (or with the whole class) and students will guess the item based off those clues.
- This strategy relates to research on the “Big 6” skills & competencies in that oral language focuses on speaking, listening, providing the foundation for written language” (Lesaux & Carr, 2024, p.3).
- Students are focusing on their speaking and listening skills in this strategy, communicating with their peers and reading vocabulary words and their clues.

Strategy in Action

Students in a classroom will be put into pairs or have this as a center rotation. One example of this is a ‘What am I?’ food-themed guessing game. One student would read the clues on the card to describe the food they have. This allows the student to practice their speaking and reading skills. The other student is using their listening skills to

identify what food their partner is describing. The teacher would play a video introducing this activity to the class and do an sample round with the students.

Related Resources

Lesaux, N.K., Carr, K.C. (2024). [Brief 1: Science of reading: What is it?](#) New York State Education Department.

38. Conversation Cards

BROOKLYNN HILL

Strategy Overview

- Conversation Cards is a learning activity that students use to practice talking to each other using topic starters within Conversation Cards. Conversation Cards are questions or prompts that are given to students that help them guide their own conversations with each other. This can be about a specific classroom topic or just cards that are helping students get to know their peers while also practicing their speech.
- Conversation Cards are important because they encourage student interaction and social skill development.

Conversation Cards are also able to help students develop their verbal expression skills along with their comprehension skills as they are not only reading what is on the card, but they are to continue listening and speaking to their partner throughout the activity. Teachers can use this activity in the classroom at any time during the day. It is most often used in between lessons or subjects as it is a great way to break up direct student learning. Teachers use this strategy to help students get up and get moving while practicing their skills and yet it is still organized. Students are learning and skill building while they believe that they are only talking to their peers. In the article, “Strength Cards Online Journal” it states, “They (the cards) promote language development as children are encouraged to express their thoughts and opinions. This allows them to expand their vocabulary and improve their communication skills” (Wood, 2023). Moreover, “discussion cards help build critical thinking skills. Children are encouraged to question, interpret, and evaluate information.

This helps them to develop analytical and problem-solving skills” (Wood, 2023).

Strategy in Action

Throughout this activity, students will be able to get up and move around and speak to their peers about the conversation cards they have in front of them. Each child will receive a question that they are to ask their partner. Before anyone moves from their seat, teachers should pass out these cards and tell the students to keep their question to themselves for right now as they don't want to give it away for the activity. First, have the student read their question to themselves silently to make sure that everyone knows what they need to ask their peers. Once everyone knows what they are to ask, each student will be assigned a number, one or two. If you were selected to be a “one”, when the teacher or instructor says so, you may get up go to the open area in the room and make a circle facing outwards. Once the “ones” are in place, the “twos” may stand up and go stand in front of one of the number “ones”. Once everyone has a partner, teacher will announce ones to ask their questions first. “Twos” will respond to the question, and they may keep talking until told otherwise. Once the conversation has quieted down, teacher will announce that “twos” may ask their question. Once the conversation has quieted down again, teacher will announce that the “twos” can rotate around the circle by however many to find a new partner to talk to. This will repeat until all of the “ones” have been partnered with all of the “twos”. Once everyone has finished, students can return to their seats and will have a class discussion about what

everyone talked about.

Related Resource

Wood, D. (2023, March 29). [The benefits and use of discussion cards.](#)
Strength Cards.

39. I Spy

ANGELA PALMER

Strategy Overview:

- I Spy is a great way to encourage students to work together to practice vocabulary and oral language skills
- This activity engages students in speaking and listening skills, which are essential in the oral language competency (Lesaux & Carr). Students must collaborate with one another in order to follow along with the activity. This skill also fosters Social Emotional Skills while they become aware of their environment and how to convey information to another person (Lesaux & Carr).
- This strategy allows students to use vocabulary skills and the understanding they have of language to give directions to their peers.
- This activity can be used as a fun warm-up/conclusion activity to the literacy block. I Spy allows students to observe the environment around them and hold discussions with their peers about what's in their environment.

Strategy in Action

This activity can happen depending on the resources available in the classroom. If the teacher has the ability to

access the resources available at [Top Teacher](#), then the teacher can use the board and dice. That would allow students to take turns describing different images on the board. Another way this activity can be used if the teacher does not have access to resources such as a game board, they can pair students up in groups of two. In the groups, students are expected to take turns describing things they see in the classroom. Prompt the students to use both physical and verbal descriptions, such as “I spy something that is blue and green” or “I spy something that is round and starts with a G.”

Student Example:

Student 1: “I Spy with my little eye... something white and rectangle”

Student 2: “Do you spy... the paper?”

Student 1: “No.”

Student 2: “Do you spy... the whiteboard?”

Student 1: “Yes! What do you spy?”

Student 2: “I Spy something that starts with the letter p.”

Student 1: Do you spy... your pencil?”

Student 2: “Yes! Your turn again.”

Related Resources

Raising Children Network. (2023, November 13). ['I spy': turn-taking and talking activity for children 3-6 years.](#)

Lesaux, N.K., Carr, K.C. (2024). [Brief 1: Science of reading: What is it?](#) New York State Education Department.

Lesaux, N.K., Carr, K.C. (2024). [Brief 5: Science of reading: The elementary years.](#) New York State Education Department.

Sesame Workshop. (2014, September 2). [Sesame street: I spy game](#) [Video]. YouTube.

40. Tell Me About It

NOELLE HALE

Strategy Overview

- Read a story aloud to the class or small group, then have students retell what they remember from the story to you, the teacher, or to their peers.
- This strategy allows students to practice putting events correctly in order, use descriptive language, and clearly retell information and events that have been presented to them.
- This activity can be used after any shared reading experience so that comprehension can be measured, or it can be used when students are independently reading, but comprehension will be much more difficult to gauge.
- “Oral Language is the foundation for written language” (Lesaux & Carr, n.d., p. 3). This activity can translate into writing prompts or activities where students need to put events into order. This activity sets the groundwork for the ability to clearly and concisely depict events or stories.

Strategy in Action

I would read the story *Creepy Carrots* to the class making sure to ask guiding questions to keep students invested in the story. Then after the story I would model how to retell

the events. Making sure to use sequencing words such as first, second, third, last. Then I would tell students to turn to a partner and share their own retelling of the story, using the sequencing language that I modeled. While students are sharing I will walk around and check for accuracy.

Related Resources

- [Oral Language Activities: Unleashing the Power of Words](#)

References

Lesaux, N. K. & Carr, K. C. (n.d.) *Science of reading: what is it?* New York State Education Department.

4I. Walk and Talk

OLIVIA CAPITANO

Strategy Overview:

A walk and talk can be conducted as a whole group activity, or one-on-one with a student who needs a behavior cool down, or even at home! Teachers can take their student(s) outside (if it is one student, it can be around the school) and take a lap or two around the field/playground/etc. As the class is walking, the teacher can pose questions that activate students' senses or spark their curiosity.

Strategy in Action

Sample Questions:

1. "Let's be quiet... what do you hear (smell, see, feel)?"
2. Or if you hear a familiar sound, stop and say, "Do you hear that knocking sound? What do you think that could be? Maybe it's a woodpecker – let's look up and see if we can spot the bird." (cite oral)
3. Maybe you see construction workers outside of the school and you ask, "What do you think they are building or fixing? Have you ever built something?"

This activity will allow students to listen to the teachers'

questions, talk about their experiences, wonderings, and thoughts, and listen to their classmates' ideas as well.”

Related Resources

- [How to Structure Student Discussions with a Walk and Talk](#)

42. Sentence Starters

SAMANTHA D'AMICO

Strategy Overview

- Sentence starters give students the beginning part of a sentence and they fill in the rest.
- Sentence starters help to develop students' **oral language skills** “by prompting students to discuss content with more complex structures and thinking...they also indirectly teach how content-specific language appears in context” (Colorín Colorado, 2024.)
- Sentence starters are especially beneficial to multilingual learners because they help the student to master English sentence structures which are often different from their first language. (Corujo, 2023).

Strategy in Action

One specific way this strategy can be used in the classroom is by asking students a “Question of the Day” (QOTD) during a morning meeting. Students would be given a sentence starter to share their answer to each question. Not only does the QOTD help with building classroom community, but also with student’s oral language skills.

Related Resources

- [Sentence Stems – The Teacher Toolkit](#) (contains video)
- [Sentence Starters and Frames for MLs – A World of Language Learners](#)

References

Corujo, J. (2023, August 15). [Sentence frames for ell students](#). HMH. <https://www.hmhco.com/blog/sentence-frames-for-ell-students>

Rrittenhouse. (2024, August 30). [Sentence frames and sentence starters](#). Colorin Colorado. <https://www.colorincolorado.org/sentence-frames>

43. Interactive Read Aloud

SARAH SPINDLER

Strategy Overview:

- In an interactive read- aloud, the teacher reads a book out loud to the class and pauses periodically to ask questions about what is happening in the story (Richardson, 23).
- The strategy builds and polishes comprehension skills. Interactive Read Alouds also help students make inferences, visualize what they are reading, and decide what is important in the text (Richardson, 23).
- Teachers can use this in the classroom during the Oral Language section of the literacy block, or any time that students are learning new information.
- According to Rick Kleine, an interactive read- aloud is also an excellent way to model fluency and to engage students in the reading. They converse with a partner to make predictions, draw connections, and discuss characters (Kleine, 2014).

Strategy in Action

You need 90 minutes of uninterrupted time for your literacy block, and Oral Language should take up a fair amount of those 90 minutes. You also suspect that some of your students do not read on their own at home, or that

some of their grown ups at home are not reading to them at home. You also know that a High Impact Practice involves interacting with complex texts that should increase in difficulty but also be interesting and culturally responsive. Additionally, this is a fantastic way to model fluency, enthusiasm for reading, and social interaction.

Teacher: Good morning, my friends! We are learning about food this week, and we are going to read one of my favorite books today. It is called “Dragons love Tacos”. Look at the cover. What do you see?

Turn to your elbow partner and tell them what you think this book will be about.

Students: turn to a partner and make predictions

Teacher: continues reading, “Friends, turn to a partner and talk about one time you ate your favorite food. What is your favorite food? Tell your partner”. This helps students make a text to self connection.

Students: turn to a partner and discuss a favorite meal

Teacher Tips:

- Write your questions on post its and put them in the book ahead of time. Don't wing it!
- Practice reading the book ahead of time so you have an idea of pacing and where to build suspense

Student Example:

Here is a video of a first grade read- aloud. I am not in this video and I do not own this video:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here:

<https://big6literacy.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=148#oembed-1>

Related Resources:

- For tips on holding students accountable during a read- aloud, click here: [keeping students accountable during a read- aloud](#)
- For a step-by-step guide on planning an interactive read aloud, click here: [how-to-create-interactive-read-aloud](#)

44. Fishbowl

CATHERINE MOEN

Strategy Overview

- Fishbowl is a speaking activity that encourages conversation within a small group, while the rest of the students listen and observe the conversation.
- This is an important activity because it allows for students to practice their oral language through public speaking and conversing with their peers.
- Fishbowl can be used in the classroom in several ways. One of the most effective ways is when your students are reading the same novel and they are given a prompt to discuss.
- During a fishbowl, “They take turns in tcaacacacacacacahese roles to practice being both contributors and listeners in a group discussion” (“[Fishbowl](#)”, 2017).

Strategy in Action

This strategy can be best used when the whole class is reading the same novel or text. The students will be broken up into two groups. The first group will sit in the middle of the classroom while the second group sits in a circle around the group creating the “fishbowl”. The inside group will then be prompted to have a conversation about a

specific topic related to the text or novel. The teacher will encourage all students to speak and refer to their text as well as any other notes or resources they have. Students will speak for 5-10 minutes while the other group listens and takes note of what the group is talking about. Once the first group is done, the next group will go to the middle of the room and the process will repeat.

Student Example

The students participated in a fishbowl while reading the novel *Esperanza Rising*. The students used their notes, novels, and graphic organizers to participate in this conversation. The students observing the fishbowl took notes on how the inside group did well and what they can improve on for the next time they participate in this activity.

Related Resources

[Fishbowl Discussion Teaching Strategy | Facing History & Ourselves](#)

45. Talk Moves

COURTNEY DENMARK

Strategy in Action

- Talk Moves is a strategy used to help students engage in classroom discussions. It is a collection of hand signals that are explicitly taught so that they can be used by all students to contribute to the conversation.
- This is important because there are a lot of times when students don't know what to say in a discussion, or they don't know how to contribute. These signals promote interaction.
- By having these signals, students can further identify their own needs. Do they agree? Do they disagree? Do they need something repeated? Do they need clarification? All types of discussion are included in Talk Moves.
- This can be used in any kind of classroom. Classroom discussions are a big part of all academic disciplines, and teaching students the signals associated with building discussion will help them learn.
- Talk Moves supports oral language by encouraging students to speak and listen—contributing their own thoughts to the conversation.

Strategy in Action

This strategy could be used after a classroom read aloud.

Students will be taught the first three signals (agree, add on, disagree) in order to respond to their peers' opinions on the story that is being read. In subsequent lessons, students would learn the other signals and eventually be able to contribute all eight at any time.

Related Resources:

Smekens Education Solutions, Inc. (2024, August 1). *Require students to listen during conversations with Talk moves.* <https://www.smekenseducation.com/require-students-to-listen-during-conversations-with-talk-moves/>

46. Sequence Storytelling

ELIZABETH BAROODY-SOLOMON

Strategy Overview:

- Interactive way for students to use oral language
- Oral language is the base for understanding oral and written language ([NYSED Literacy Brief #1](#))
- Easy to use during station work or as a full class
- Engages many senses as students view pictures, brainstorm ideas out-loud and collaborate on a story together

Strategy in Action

Provide students with picture cards that clearly illustrate a “sequential” event, such as the life cycle of an insect or a child moving through their daily routine. Students work together to place them in chronological order and explain their thinking out-loud.

Related Resources:

- [The Essential Guide To 11 Fun Oral Language Development Activities \(brightlittleowl.com\)](#)

- [Basics: Oral Language | Reading Rockets](#)

47. Think Pair Share

EMILY MAHANY

Strategy Overview

- The objective of a Think, Pair, Share activity is to get students working on critical thinking and sharing their ideas with partners and the rest of the class mindfully.
- This is important because it encourages students to develop well thought out responses and requires listening to other students' perspectives while collaborating to form an answer. This also helps when it comes to writing out your thoughts.
- Think, Pair, Share can be done in multiple ways in the classroom. From a read aloud to how you solved a math problem.
- Think, Pair, Share is a way to get all students engaged in your classroom. This leads to greater academic success in the long run. "Numerous studies have shown that engaging in activities, such as asking questions and contributing to classroom discussions, can support learning processes and enhance academic achievements" ([Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021](#)).

Strategy in Action

Students will be given a question and have 30-60 seconds to think about their response. They will then do a turn and talk with their partner and collaborate on what they came

up with. This can include jotting down ideas and talking points. After, the teacher will have the students come together and discuss as a class.

Related Resources

- [Think-Pair-Share | Reading Rockets](#)
- [Using the Think-Pair-Share Technique | Read Write Think](#)

References

Mundelsee, L., & Jurkowski, S. (2021). Think and pair before share: Effects of collaboration on students' in-class participation. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 88, Article 102015. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2021.102015>

48. Group Storytelling

ISABELLE RITZ

Strategy Overview

Group Storytelling is where students orally tell a story. This can take place whole group but is best in a small group setting. The teacher will come up with a topic and have students start a think aloud about the elements of the story. Then children will tell the story bit by bit making sure to build off one another. This is a great activity that can be done quickly at the beginning of a literacy block. This activity is engaging for students, allows them to use their imagination, and take on different characters. Based on research, story telling increases engagement and is a “simple interactive game that allows students to actively participate in the learning and engages students in the learning activity.... Results show that students have high learning satisfaction in the interactive storytelling learning activity” ([Weng et al., 2011](#)).

Strategy in Action

The teacher should prompt students with a topic or one element of story to get students started. For example, a dragon, summer mystery, or holiday dilemma . Then students should start to brainstorm characters, the setting, the problem, and then the resolution. Students should build off one another either pretending to be a character or the

narrator of the story. The teacher should prompt with “add more detail, how was the character feeling, or did the problem get resolved and how?” The activity should take no more than 10-15 minutes.

Related Resources

BethMooreSchool. (2014, April 6). A mini-crash-course on oral storytelling. TWO WRITING TEACHERS. <https://twowritingteachers.org/2014/04/06/a-mini-crash-course-on-oral-storytelling/>

References

Weng, J.-F., Kuo, H., & Tseng, S.-S. (2011, July 6). Interactive storytelling for elementary school nature science education. *International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/icalt.2011.104>

49. What Am I?

JACOB HIGGINS

Strategy Overview

- What Am I is a food-themed riddle guessing game where students have to guess what food their partner is talking about
- It is important because it helps students understand clues to determine the secret food.
- It can be used in the classroom by having students divide into partners and go through all of the cards together.
- It relates to research by knowing that riddles can improve children's memory and recall skills (Emmerson, 2023).

Strategy in Action

What am I is a strategy where students have conversations with each other and have increased oral communication with their peers..

Related Resources

- [Oral Language Comprehension: Activities for Your Pre-K Child | Reading Rockets](#)

- [Oral Language Activities: Unleashing the Power of Words](#)

References

Emmerson, A. (2023, July 26). *10 fantastic oral language activities*. <https://www.twinkl.com/blog/10-fantastic-oral-language-activities>

50. Read and Retell

JANELLE SCOTT

Strategy Overview

Read and Retell is an amazing strategy to support oral language, “Read and Retell is an excellent strategy to use in order to allow children to transform a text into their own words, taking only what is really understood” (Mowbray, 2010, p. 10). Retells can do so much for a learner, such as, “Intensive reading, writing, talking and listening around a central theme, involving collaborative use of the language components. Active engagement with the text through multiple readings and re-readings of at least three different texts: the original text, the participant’s and then peer retellings” (Mowbray, 2010, p. 11).

Strategy in Action

Students can often get nervous when it comes to building their oral language skills because a lot of students are shy or unwilling to speak, especially in a classroom setting. This strategy of Read and Retell gives the children a chance to build on the skill of oral language in a way more comfortable for them as they get to use language, they are comfortable with and share things that seem important to them from the story when they are retelling it. This strategy can be adapted to student needs— it can be done

whole class or in pairs. Check out the resource below that show the benefits of engaging in the Read and Retell strategy in the classroom. [Read and Retell Resource](#)

Related Resources

- [The Use of Read, Cover, Remember, Retell \(Rcrr\) Strategy in Improving Students' Reading Comprehension Ability | Acuity: Journal of English Language Pedagogy, Literature and Culture](#)

References

Mowbray, T. (2010). The power of read and retell. *Practically Primary*, 15(2), 10–12.

51. Sentence Starter Sticks

JILLIAN OWENS

Strategy Overview

- This strategy requires the teacher to label popsicle sticks with sentence starters that students can use to guide their conversations in the classroom.
- Students will pick a stick at random and read the sentence starter on the stick. The student will finish the sentence with a related thought.
- Sentence starters serve as a scaffold to help children express ideas in full sentences ([Savoie, 2023](#)).
- Sentence starters give students the vocabulary they need to participate in academic discussions ([Savoie, 2023](#)).
- This strategy supports academic conversations by connecting ideas throughout the conversation and pushing the conversation in new directions (Serravallo, 2015).

Strategy in Action

Sentence starter sticks can be used in a variety of different formats. They can be used to aid partner, small group, or even class discussions. After students are given a prompt to discuss, the popsicle sticks can be used to guide the conversation. As students run out of things to talk

about, they can pull sticks from the jar to continue the conversation. The students will use the sentence starter on the stick they pulled and then finish the sentence in a way that relates to the conversation so far.

Before using sentence starter sticks, the teacher should model the use of them. Students will need to hear examples of how the sentence starters would be used in a sentence. Consider using different sentence starters for different content areas.

Related Resources

- [Sentence Stems – Accommodation Central \(acentral.education\)](https://www.central.education)

References

Savoie, L. (2023, January 10). *Developing language skills with sentence stems*. Community Educational Research Group. <https://www.commresh.com/developing-language-skills-with-sentence-stems>

Serravallo, J. (2015). *The reading strategies book: Your everything guide to developing skilled readers*. Heinemann.

52. Morning Meeting

JULIANNE DARDIS

Strategy Overview

- Morning meetings are a great way to start the day in your classroom and get every student connected, ready, and excited for the day of learning ahead.
- “Starting each day with these positive interactions sets an expectation for the rest of the day” ([Dooley, 2019, p. 5](#)).
- Morning meetings allow for a classroom community to be established, and they allow each and every student the opportunity to talk and discuss with their classmates.
- Morning meetings allow for the teacher to create a positive learning environment while incorporating though-provoking conversations and an inclusive environment.
- “Morning meetings are most commonly implemented in elementary schools as a class meeting at the beginning of each school day. Many elementary teachers use morning meetings for the entire year as a way to build community while ensuring that each student feels heard, valued, and respected” ([Woolf, 2021](#)).

Strategy in Action

Morning meetings are a fun and easy way to start the day in the classroom. Students will be asked to join in a circle

on the carpet or to arrange their desks in a way where they can see everyone in the room. “The overarching goals of morning meetings are to promote emotional awareness, establish trust and psychological safety, support social-emotional needs for academic engagement, foster a sense of connection and community, and encourage collaboration and teamwork,” (Woolf, 2021). That is exactly what you want to do. From the very beginning of the school year, establish a routine with the students to know when and where morning meeting will take place. When doing morning meetings, always start off with a greeting. Have an object that is used (a ball, a stuffed animal, a classroom mascot, etc.) that is passed from student to student as they say good morning. Students should say, “Good morning (student name)”, then the student passes the object to that student. That student says good morning to the first student and then turns and repeats the same process. Remind students to practice good listening skills and maintain eye contact with the classmate that is greeting them. Once all the way around the circle, the teacher chooses a topic that the students will discuss with each other. Some ideas for the topic may be: what is your least favorite food? What is your favorite color? What did you do over the weekend? and many more. Students will follow the same procedures as before, answering the question as a complete sentence, and passing the object to the classmate next to them. Once every student has shared, the teacher can move on and begin to discuss the daily routine for the day. This is the conclusion of the morning meeting, and the class can begin with the next step in their daily routine.

References

Dooley, A. (2019). *Morning meeting: An examination of its effect on student morning meeting: An examination of its effect on student behavior and peer relationships behavior and peer relationships*. Northwestern College Master's Theses.

https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/education_masters/157/

Woolf, N. (2021). *Morning meetings: Cultivating a culture of care and safety*. Panorama Education. <https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/morning-meeting>

53. Shared Reading

LAURA BYRD

Strategy Overview

An interactive read aloud experience where students are active participants. The teacher's job is to model what "good readers" do, such as making predictions and inferences, summarizing, and looking at the illustrations. ([Reading Rockets, n.d.](#))

Strategy in Action

Shared Reading can be done in both whole group and small group settings. The text that is used can be fiction or nonfiction; while modeling, the teacher should encourage student participation. If possible, it is best to use differentiated levels of the same text to meet the needs of all students. Students with disabilities and ELLs can also engage in Shared Reading.

Student Example

After a text is read as a whole group, break into centers to support different learners with Shared Reading. Provide

lower levels of the same text (if possible) and use the CAR and CROWD strategies to engage.

Related Resources

- [Shared reading | Literacy Instruction for Students with Significant Disabilities](#)
- [Shared Reading | Learning for Justice](#)

References

Reading Rockets. (n.d.). *Shared reading*.
<https://www.readingrockets.org/classroom/classroom-strategies/shared-reading>

SKILL/COMPETENCY IV

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Lesaux and Carr (2024) define phonological awareness as, “an awareness of speech sounds” and include phonemic awareness “the ability to identify and manipulate sounds” (p. 3). While some readers gain phonological awareness expertise from being immersed in a variety of meaningful and interesting texts, songs, and rhymes (and the accompanying text-based conversations and teaching that go along with it), other readers may need more systematic phonological awareness instruction. While many schools have adopted remedial phonological awareness programs for use with ALL students, not just those who need extra practice, we urge our colleagues to be mindful; knowing your readers is essential to avoid wasting instructional time on skills and competencies students already excel at. We hope the resources shared by teachers in this section can be used for engaging and meaningful literacy practice in the classroom for those students who need it.

54. Four Corners

MADISON LONG

Strategy Overview

- Four Corners is a great activity for students to practice their literacy skills and grow in their development.
- This strategy allows for students to integrate their comprehension of phonic skills and work together to determine which corner to go to.
- The benefits of this activity include active learning, critical thinking, communication, listening, decision-making, collaboration, engagement, different viewpoints, and skill application.

Strategy in Action

“Your kids will love this game! Hang a number sign in each corner of your classroom. Students choose a corner to stand. You pull out a picture card and the kids clap the syllables in word, such as all-i-ga-tor. Alligator has 4 syllables so anyone who is standing in the 4 syllables corner is “out.” Those students come to the rug to help clap the syllables in the next word. You can keep playing until one student is left or you run out of time.” ([*Phonological awareness activities with movement, n.d*](#))

Student Example

1. Teacher establishes the four corners of the room for students to decide between.
2. The teacher leads the activity by calling out which words/syllables for that specific round.
3. Students then get to engage in the activity by going to do different corners based on the words that are called.

References

Phonological awareness activities with movement. (n.d.). Polka Dots Please. <https://polkadotsplease.com/2021/11/phonological-awareness-activities-with-movement.html>

55. Chop Up a Message

CAROLINE MASSARO

Strategy Overview

- Chop Up a Message is a phonological awareness activity that promotes students' ability to identify sentence structure. Students learn that sentences are made up of words and words are made up of letters.
- An activity like Chop Up a Message is important to aid in students' phonological awareness skills, because it promotes being able to identify parts of a sentence and how many words are in each part. Teachers can use this activity in the classroom as a small group station with students and the teacher. The teacher will demonstrate how to chop up a sentence using sentence strips to determine the parts of a sentence.
- This activity relates to research of the “Big 6” skills & competencies. When it comes to phonological awareness, students need to be able to “identify and manipulate sounds” (Lesaux & Carr, 2024, p. 3).

Strategy in Action

The teacher would take a small group of students to conduct the activity, Chop Up a Message. You will need

sentence strips, scissors, and a white board to write down sentences. The teacher will plan a sentence with the students (silly sentences are a great engagement booster) and write it down on the board. The students will repeat the sentence out loud and start to identify the different parts of the sentence. They will then help “chop up” a sentence strip with the appropriate amount of pieces/ words. In order to do so, students need to be able to break up each part of the sentence and recognize how many words they hear/see. This is a great hands-on activity for students to visually see how many parts make up a sentence!

Related Resources

Lesaux, N.K., Carr, K.C. (2024). [Brief 1: Science of reading: What is it?](#) New York State Education Department.

56. Rhyming Bingo

MATTHEW MALERBA

Strategy Overview

- Game that helps students identify words that sound alike and recognize rhymes.
- Focuses on acknowledging, understanding, and replicating speech.
- You can help ELLs strengthen their knowledge of the sounds of the English language through read alouds, songs, poems, and other word games ([A World of Language Learners, 2020](#)).
- Many students are bilingual and when growing up, it can be confusing learning in English in school but hearing and speaking another language at home, therefore focusing on the sound of the English language is very beneficial.
- Especially for older ELLs, it is helpful to focus on the sounds that are different between English and their native language ([A World of Language Learners, 2020](#))

Strategy in Action

Students will all be given multiple bingo sheets with words in each of the bingo squares, but the trick is that none of these words rhyme with each other. Then, the teacher will present a word that rhymes with one of the words on the students' pages and the students must all say

the word presented out loud and then find the word on their paper that it rhymes with. Students will then continue filling out their bingo cards until 3 people have bingo (the first and second winners keep playing after they win).

Student Example

The teacher passes out bingo cards to everyone and posts “Word 1: Clean” on the board. Students find the word on their bingo cards that rhymes with “clean.” Once they locate that word, they write the word clean in that box and mark the box. Students keep going until the teacher seems fit.

References

A World of Language Learners. (2020, April 20). *Phonemic awareness with ELLs*. <https://www.aworldoflanguagelearners.com/phonemic-awareness/>

57. Lost Beginnings

BROOKLYNN HILL

Strategy Overview

- This activity is a way for students to understand how words can be similar but have different spellings. This activity is for students to work on identifying new words that have similar endings. During the Lost Beginnings activity, students will be given an ending of a word. Students will have to find different letters or sounds that they can change to make a new word to practice manipulating sounds. For example: game, or fame, or tame, or shame.
- In the literacy online website “Reading Rockets” it states, “When students understand that spoken words can be broken up into individual sounds (phonemes) and that letters can be used to represent those sounds, they have the insight necessary to read and write in an alphabetic language. Blending and segmenting games and activities can help students to develop phonemic awareness, a strong predictor of reading achievement” (Reading Rockets). In another online literacy resource “SAVVAS Learning Company” it states, “Phonological awareness is an essential skill, without which students cannot become strong, independent readers. The Science of Reading identifies phonological awareness as one of the critical elements of reading, along with phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension” (SAVVAS Learning Company).

Strategy in Action

In the classroom, teachers can set up this activity by creating the Lost Beginnings word puzzles. Here's what to do:

- Create little chunks of paper (index cards work well) that have the same endings of words.
- Then, teachers will also create the different beginnings of the words on small chunks of paper that can fit into those same endings.
- Students will be split into small groups to work on the Lost Beginning puzzles. Students will start with easier words and as they complete more words they will gradually get more difficult.
- Once students finish a section of words with the same ending, they will have to explain the differences in each word, their meaning and what they sound like.
- Students can then move on to the next grouping of words.
- Repeat as desired and time allows

Related Resources

Eastman, P. D., Silverstein, S., Hopkins, L. B., & Shulman, M. (n.d.). [Elkonin boxes](#). Reading Rockets.

Perkins, L. R., Silverstein, S., McCall, F., & Rosen, M. (n.d.). [*Blending and segmenting games*](#). Reading Rockets.

SAVVAS Literacy Company. (n.d.). [50 fun phonics activities](#).

58. Rhyme Match

NOELLE HALE

Strategy Overview

- Students will be provided a set of cards, each card has a simple picture on it, students will identify the object on the card. Each card has a matching card with an object whose name rhymes with it. Students will pair the cards that rhyme together.
- Phonological awareness is the ability to identify speech sounds (Lesaux & Carr, n.d., p. 3). This activity helps identify similar sounds as well as differences in beginning sounds that differentiates words with the same endings from each other.

Strategy in Action

I would create a set of cards (ball, tall, cat, bat, dog, frog, fox, box, etc.) with a picture of each object. In a small group for students who need extra rhyming practice, we would first identify all of the objects on the cards so that all students are pulling from the same mental word bank. Then I would instruct students to pair cards together that rhyme. I would state that words that rhyme have the same middle and ending sounds but differ in their beginning sounds. I would give students a few minutes to make their matches. While they are matching, if any students are struggling with

remembering an object I will go over it with them individually. After all students have been provided an appropriate amount of time, we will go through the cards to ensure student accurately paired their cards together.

Related Resources

- [40 Low-Prep Phonological Awareness Activities](#)

References

Lesaux, N. K. & Carr, K. C. (n.d.) Science of reading: what is it? New York State Education Department.

59. Roll, Rhyme and Race!

SAMANTHA D'AMICO

Strategy Overview

- “Roll, Rhyme, and Race” is a game used to help develop students’ phonological awareness skills.
- Using this game with students is an effective strategy because it is engaging, hands-on, and invites students to be active participants in the learning process.
- Rhyming helps to develop students’ phonemic awareness because it requires students to listen to the sounds within words and to identify word parts (*Resources for Early Learning*, n.d.).

Strategy in Action

Players take turns rolling the dice. Players say the word associated with their number rolled, according to the key located on the side of the game board. Then, the student finds the nearest rhyming word and moves their game piece to that space. Whoever reaches the trophy space first wins the game. It is suggested that the teacher teaches this game in small groups. Then, as students get accustomed to the rules, this activity can be used in a center.

References

Department of Early Education and Care. (n.d.). [Having fun with phonemic awareness](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators/module/20/28/136/). <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators/module/20/28/136/>

60. Syllable Jump

TRISHA MILLIMAN

Strategy Overview

- Help children identify syllables in words by breaking them down into parts.
- By breaking down the words, it helps children retain the concepts associated with each word.
- Explain what syllables are and how they can be broken down in each word.

Strategy in Action

I will place numbers on the floor from 1 to 5. When I say a word aloud, you will have to identify the number of syllables in that word. Then, you will jump to the corresponding number that represents the syllable count. For example, if the word has three syllables, they will jump to the number 3.

Student Example

1. Put numbers on the floor from one to five.
2. Students will jump to the number that
3. Represents the number of syllables they believe are in the word.
4. Pronounce the word clearly, emphasizing each syllable as you say it.

61. Sound Bags

CATHERINE MOEN

Strategy Overview:

- Sound bags are fun ways to get students to build phonological awareness. Teachers can prepare these bags or boxes with items that have the same first letter. For added engagement, have students make their own sound bags for a specific letter by going on a classroom scavenger hunt.
- It is important because it can help students better understand how to identify letters and letter sounds by looking at items that start with the same letter in a fun way. Sound bags can make for a fun in class activity or even homework assignment. It also allows for the understanding of alliteration and students can make up stories to go along with the items in their bag.
- “In the early days, it is more about hearing that alliteration is happening, rather than making up your own words. Fun games that help play with words and sounds really help, such as having alliterative names for children and characters” (“Phase One Phonics Alliteration Games- 10 Terrific Ideas”)

Strategy in Action:

For this activity, the teacher would lead the students first in exploring what a sound bag is. The teacher will prepare a

bag or box with items that all start with the same letter. For example, a bag filled with items that begin with “s”. Some items that could be included could be scissors, stamps, stickers, staples, etc. The teacher would then go through the bag taking each item out and saying what it is. The teacher can either tell the students what the letter is or have the students guess what the letter is depending on grade level and ability. Once the students know what is in the bag and what the letter is, the students can then say the letter sound to the teacher and to one another to make sure they know what it is. After this, the students and the teacher can make up a story based on the items in the bag as well as adding other words if needed. The students are also practicing alliteration by repeating the same letter sound in their story.

Student Example

The students created their own letter bags for a homework assignment with items they found around the house. One student created a sound bag for the letter “b”. The items that were included were gum, glasses, gummies, etc. The student shared the bag with the class, and they practiced saying the letter sound together. They students after made up a story using the items that were in the bag.

Related Resources

- [Phase One Phonics Alliteration Games – 10 Terrific Ideas! – Early Impact Learning](#)

62. Change a Name Game

COURTNEY DENMARK

Strategy Overview:

- The Change-a-Name Game is a learning activity where students take the classic “name game” and change the beginning sound of their name to make a new word. This can also be done with nursery rhymes and common songs, as seen in the example provided below.
- This is important because it teaches students how to segment words into their different parts. By changing the first sound of every word, they are showing their phonological awareness and showing that they can break down and identify sounds.
- This has been shown as an important part of phoneme segmentation. Explicit instruction in phoneme segmentation and blending (as exhibited in this strategy) is much more effective as a teaching strategy than teaching rhyming or vocabulary ([Yeh & Connell, 2008](#)).

Strategy in Action

Students will each choose a common nursery rhyme (short ones, preferably, but student independence in choice will be encouraged). They will type (or handwrite, depending on classroom resources) it out the way it is meant to be read. Next, students will go through and

change the first letter in each word so that it is all the same. Students will then read aloud (in small groups) their new rhyme, giving themselves and their group members an opportunity to practice the letter sounds and the new words they have created.

Related Resources:

Yeh, S.S., & Connell, D.B. (2008). Effects of rhyming, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness instruction on phoneme awareness. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 31(2), 243-256. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9817.2007.00353.x>

63. Tongue Twisters

ELIZABETH BAROODY-SOLOMON

Strategy Overview:

- A dynamic manner in which to increase phonological awareness
- A natural way to focus on categories of sound
- Use it in small groups or together as a large class
- Great variation to traditional station work during a literacy block time

Strategy in Action

Pick 5-6 tongue twisters of your choice. Work on them together as a large class and model the sounds for students. Once students are divided into small groups, have students focus on one tongue twister at a time. Who can say each one the fastest and still pronounce all the sounds clearly?

Related Resources:

- [40 Low-Prep Phonological Awareness Activities](#)

weareteachers.com)

- [55+ of the Best Tongue Twisters For Kids, Ranging from Easy to Impossible \(fatherly.com\)](#)

64. Substituting Letter Sounds in Songs

JILLIAN OWENS

Strategy Overview

- The class will sing familiar songs but substitute the first sound of each of the words with a different sound.
- This activity builds phonological awareness as students sing the song and practice substituting sounds, it builds their awareness that words are built from individual sounds.

Strategy in Action

The class will together practice singing a familiar song normally to ensure that everyone knows the words of the song. Then the teacher will choose a new sound to replace the beginning of each word of the song. The class will sing the song again, making sure to substitute the beginning sounds of the words. The teacher can continue this process with other sounds.

Related Resources:

- [Phonological Awareness: Instructional and Assessment Guidelines | Reading Rockets](#)

65. Listen to the Beginning

EMILY MAHANY

Strategy Overview

- The object of this game is to identify which two pictures on the smart board start with the same beginning sound.
- This is important because it teaches students how to break words and sentences up. It teaches us how to rhyme and piece words together.
- This can be used as a station or whole group activity. Students can do this on their chrome books for a station, or they can take turns coming up to the smartboard.
- “Phonological awareness, or the awareness of and ability to work with sounds in spoken language, sets the stage for decoding, blending, and, ultimately, word reading” (Massliteracy, 2024).

Strategy in Action

Students will be shown three pictures. For example, a Cat, a Car, and an Egg. They will listen to each word and decide which two have the same beginning sound. In this example, the answer is Cat and Car. If the student does not pick the right answer, play the words or say the words for them again and emphasize each beginning sound.

Student Example

Which two have the same beginning sound?

Egg

Cat

Car

References

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021, December 14). *Skills for early reading: Phonological awareness – evidence based early literacy*. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/skilled-reading/fluent-word-reading/phonological-awareness.html>

66. Clapping out Syllables

ISABELLE RITZ

Strategy Overview

Clapping out syllables is where students clap out the parts of a word. Students can hear that words are made up of smaller parts, which helps them with breaking up words they will eventually need to write. There is variety of ways to introduce this starter to the class. Students can clap out syllables whole group, small group, or independently. One way is to have students sort and group words by syllables. Clapping out syllables is a critical skill because it “helps children notice the sounds in each part of word and they will later use their knowledge of word parts to spell words” ([Lastinger Center for Learning](#), n.d.).

Strategy in Action

Teacher will provide groups of children with an array of cards with a word and picture on it. Words can have 1- 4 syllables. Students should clap out the syllables of each word and then place the card into groups by syllables. For example, all words with 2 syllables should be grouped together and all words with 4 syllables should be grouped together. Teacher should prompt students around how many syllables they clapped out, if they noticed it was a compound word, and prompt around saying each smaller

part of a word.

Related Resources

- [Tip Sheet: Draw Attention to Syllables with Clapping Games](#)

67. Team Sounds

JULIANNE DARDIS

Strategy Overview

- Team sounds encourages students to work in groups and promote collaboration and teamwork.
- Team sounds help students break up words into segments that are easily recognizable.
- “By breaking down words into individual phonemes, learners can sound out words and begin to recognize patterns” ([95 Percent Group, 2024](#)).
- This strategy may align directly with your curriculum's set phonics instruction, where this activity can easily be included in instruction.
- This strategy is best suited for students grades K-2. This strategy can be adapted for all learners.

Strategy in Action

For this strategy, students will be divided into three teams; beginning sound(s), middle sound, and ending sound(s). Once students are divided into teams, the teacher will say a word aloud. This word may be one from the lesson or one from the phonics/ECRI lesson that is being taught for the day. Once the teacher has said the word, the students as a group are responsible for determining the

letters and sound that corresponds with their given team (beginning, middle, or ending sounds). Continue this routine for a few words. After, rotate the teams so that each group now has a new responsibility. Continue to read words and rotate groups until each group has had the chance to isolate each segment of the words. Words may be repeated and reused, therefore building stronger bridges in the variations of words. As we have learned, “Phonological awareness is the understanding of different ways that oral language can be divided into smaller components and manipulated. Spoken language can be broken down in many different ways, including sentences into words and words into syllables...” (Chard & Dickson, 1999). This directly corresponds with this strategy. Students are breaking down the given word into smaller sections in order to make the determination of what letters are included in their given segment of the word. This activity is a fun and engaging way to include decoding and segmentation skills into the classroom while also giving students the ability to have friendly competitions within the classroom. This strategy/activity has been used in multiple classrooms that I have worked in, and the students thoroughly enjoy the friendly competition with their peers.

References

- 95 Percent Group. (2024, February 5). *Mastering phoneme segmentation*. <https://www.95percentgroup.com/insights/phoneme-segmentation/>
- Chard, D. J., & Dickson, S. V. (1999). *Phonological awareness: Instructional and assessment guidelines*. Reading Rockets.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/phonological-and-phonemic-awareness/articles/phonological-awareness-instructional-and>

68. Syllable Count Game

LAURA BYRD

Strategy Overview

Getting students up and moving helps to stimulate the brain and cements concepts ([Carr, 2024](#)). This game allows students to follow movements while counting syllables in different words.

Strategy in Action

This is a great activity for a whole group lesson or a quick movement break. Have students stand up and mimic your movements as you practice counting syllables. You can clap, stomp your feet, fist bump the air, etc. Students can also work in pairs for this!

Student Example

While students are waiting for dismissal, in line, or their

seats, have them clap, snap or stomp out words while counting syllables! (Literacy, 2021)

Related Resources

- [15 Helpful Activities for Counting Syllables • Primarily Learning](#)

References

Carr, E. (2024, May 31). *Teachers can harness the power of movement to boost student learning*. <https://njalternateroute.rutgers.edu/blog/teachers-can-harness-power-movement-boost-student-learning>

SKILL/COMPETENCY V

PHONICS

What is Phonics?

Lesaux and Carr (2024, p.3) define phonics as, “an instructional method that involves systematically matching sounds with the letters that represent the sounds.” While some readers are able to gain phonics understandings and expertise from being immersed in a variety of meaningful and interesting texts, songs, and rhymes (and the accompanying text-based conversations and teaching that go along with it), other readers need more systematic phonics instruction. While many schools have adopted remedial phonics programs for use with ALL students, not just those who need extra practice, we urge our colleagues to be mindful; knowing your readers is essential to avoid wasting instructional time on skills and competencies students already excel at. We hope the resources shared by teachers in this section can be used for engaging and meaningful phonics practice in the classroom for those students who need it.

69. Word Wheel

MATTHEW MALERBA

Strategy Overview

- Helps students create words that are either real or fake, while also using a variety of different sounds at the beginning and at the end.
- Word wheels will support your students in becoming more effective communicators ([Sutton, 2020](#)).
- Students enhance their pronunciation and understanding of sounds of different letters and words as a whole.
- Exposure to the matching of specific sounds to a specific letter.
- Enhances collaboration skills and causes students to truly listen to themselves and each other.

Strategy in Action

The teacher groups the students while keeping in mind the students that communicate well with each other. The teacher will distribute premade word wheels, or simply have students build their own. Students will then take turns spinning their respective wheels and saying aloud the words that are created from that spin. They can spin both the wheel with the starting sound and the wheel with the ending sound or simply choose one to spin. The idea is to

have a wide variety of potential words (real or fake) that students will be sounding out. As a bonus, students can then group these words into whether they think they are real or fake.

Student Example

The teacher passes out word wheels to each student, Student 1 spins their wheel, it lands on a sound combination and the student reads the word at hand, Student 2 then repeats this word, both students now decide if this word is real or fake, then the entire process is repeated as Student 2 is the one spinning their wheel, students take turns until the teacher seems fit.

Related Resources

- [Phonics Word Wheels for Reading Groups or Word Work](#)

References

Sutton, K. (2020, August 3). *Using vocabulary wheels* | Cambridge English. World of Better Learning | Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2020/08/03/spin-it-using-vocabulary-wheels-to-widen-learners-lexical-range/>

70. Slap the Letter Sounds

CAROLINE MASSARO

Strategy Overview

- Slap the letter sounds is an activity that promotes phonic skills
- This is an activity that students can play to practice identifying words letter by letter. Students are practicing making words and identifying the individual letter sounds throughout the word.
- An activity like this is important for phonics development because it allows students to both make words and break the words apart to focus on the phonics component of language.
- This activity can be used in the classroom as a center rotation to get extended phonics practice for students who would benefit from it.. Students will have a fly swatter and magnetic letters to use as manipulatives.
- Slap the letter sounds relates to the “Big 6” skills & competencies regarding phonics, as it “involves systematically matching sounds with the letters that represent the sounds” (Lesaux & Carr, 2024, p. 3).

Strategy in Action

The teacher would explain to students how to use the manipulatives at the center or as a game as a whole class. Students will have a fly swatter and magnetic letters. The

teacher or students can build words with the magnetic letters. These can be vocabulary words, CVC words, or basic sight words for any additional practice the students might need. The students will swat away each letter in the words when saying the sounds they make. Students are practicing letter- sound correspondence, while adding some fun and enjoyment swatting the letters away!

Related Resources

Lesaux, N.K., Carr, K.C. (2024). [Brief 1: Science of reading: What is it?](#) New York State Education Department.

71. Letter Stamps

MADISON LONG

Strategy Overview

- Letter stamps allow for a creative spin on engagement for students with their alphabet recognition and phonemic sounds.
- This strategy allows for students to have fun in their learning by using stamping letters which ultimately will increase engagement.
- The benefits of this activity include hand eye coordination, letter recognition, fine motor skills, spatial awareness, pattern sequencing, creativity, multi-sensory learning, and visual perception skills.

Strategy in Action (from [Peterson, n.d.](#))

“Letter stamps are a versatile and effective tool for teaching kindergarten students how to read and write. By incorporating letter stamps into the classroom, you can help your little learners develop important skills and foster a love of learning that will serve them well throughout their academic careers.”

Student Example

Students can use letter stamping to practice their letter recognition, vocabulary and fluency skills, as well as word skills and spelling.

Related Resources

- [Stamp Your Letters](#)
- [Literacy Activities: Stamp & Spell Literacy Play](#)

References

Peterson, A. (n.d.). Benefits of letter stamps in kindergarten. *Kindergarten Chaos*.
<https://kindergartenchaos.com/benefits-of-letter-stamps-in-kindergarten/>

72. Elkonin Boxes

BROOKLYNN HILL

Strategy Overview

- Elkonin Boxes are beneficial because they help students break up words into sounds that make up words. According to Reading Rockets, Elkonin Boxes “ help students build phonological awareness by segmenting words into sounds or syllables. They teach students how to count the number of phonemes in the word (not always the number of letters). They help students better understand the alphabetic principle in decoding and spelling.” (Reading Rockets).
- In the classroom, this activity can be used throughout the school year. Anytime that students are introduced to new site words, vocabulary words, or words that they do not know how to identify, this activity will be able to help them put the sounds of the words together. This activity can be done as a full class, however it is more effective when it takes place in small groups. Students work together to separate the sounds of each letter that make up a word. When working in small groups, this activity becomes more individualized, and students are able to work more 1:1 with the words they struggle with. Working alongside their peers on this activity helps them when they might get stuck on one sound, the group can work together to figure out the sounds. Elkonin Boxes is also a great example of an activity that you can send home with your students to work on with their parents outside of school.

Strategy in Action

To use this strategy in the classroom, first the teacher or instructor must give students paper or a white board that they can draw boxes on that will represent sounds. Students will first listen to the teacher sound out the word that they are currently working on. Students will practice sounding out the word slowly. Have the students stretch out each sound of the word so they can identify the letters that create that sound. Students then need to repeat the word that they just sounded out. Draw boxes on the given paper or white board with one box for each syllable or phoneme. Students will then count how many phonemes they find in the word. Note that this may not be the same number of letters. The student will then move the tile or box, or colored circle into the boxes repeating the sound of the word. Once all of the boxes are covered, have the student repeat the word one final time. Repeat with as many words as students need to review.

Related Resources

Eastman, P. D., Silverstein, S., Hopkins, L. B., & Shulman, M. (n.d.). [Elkonin boxes](#). Reading Rockets.

Understood. (2019, January 28). [Literacy strategy- Elkonin sound boxes](#) [Video]. YouTube.

SAVVAS Literacy Company (n.d.). [50 fun phonics activities](#).

73. Say It, Pop It, Write It

SAMANTHA D'AMICO

Strategy Overview

- “Say It, Pop It, Write It” is a strategy that is used to help students associate letters with their sounds.
- First the student dictates a given word. Then students isolate each sound by “popping” each sound on a Pop-It. Then, students write the letter for each sound in order to spell the word.
- According to *95 Percent Group*, (2024), “By breaking down words into individual phonemes, learners can sound out words and begin to recognize patterns... which will allow them to build greater automaticity leading to increased fluency.”

Strategy in Action

“Say It, Pop It, Write It” can be used as a small/whole group instructional activity, early finisher activity, center activity, etc. To enhance this activity, the teacher can write a different letter of the alphabet on each bubble so that students associate the phoneme with the grapheme as they pop each sound. This strategy can also be implemented digitally (linked below). Make sure that clear expectations are set (“Boys and girls, for this activity, the Pop-It will be

used as a *tool* instead of as a *toy*.”) Practice with each student before they are sent off to try this activity independently.

Related Resources

- [Say it. Pop it. Write it – Science of Reading Centers – My Nerdy Teacher](#)

References

95 Percent Group. (2024, February 14). [Mastering phoneme segmentation](https://www.95percentgroup.com/insights/phoneme-segmentation/). <https://www.95percentgroup.com/insights/phoneme-segmentation/>

74. Phonics Hopscotch

TRISHA MILLIMAN

Strategy Overview:

- Phonics Hopscotch helps with the recognition of the sounds and letters of words.
- It aids in learning the sounds needed for the pronunciation of words.
- It helps children sound out the letters to decode words.

Strategy in Action

The activity will involve a fun and interactive version of hopscotch, where each box contains two or more letters. You will take turns rolling a stone onto a designated square. Once the stone lands, you will pronounce the letters found in that box clearly. After identifying the letters, each student will then challenge themselves to come up with a word that includes those letters.

Student Example

1.) The first student will throw a stone onto the designated square and clearly pronounce the letters that are inside the box. This step encourages them to focus on letter recognition and sound out each letter accurately.
2. After identifying the letters, the student must then create a word that includes those letters. This challenge will prompt students to think critically and creatively as they brainstorm various words that can be formed

75. Word Chaining

CATHERINE MOEN

Strategy Overview

- Word Chaining is a way for students to start with one word and then change a letter to have a new word. This works best with teacher guidance so that students can hear the letter that needs to be changed based on the sound they hear.
- This is important because students can practice connecting letters and letter sounds which is essential to their understanding of phonics.
- “When students word chain, they have to think about both the sound and the print. The important thing to remember is that when students practice word chaining, they are only changing one sound at a time” ([Burkholder, 2023](#)).

Strategy in Action

The teacher will begin by giving the students a soundboard or having a word chaining chart presented for the students to see. The teacher will begin by having a word to start with. Starting small with a 3-letter word for young learners is a good way to start. The teacher will read the word to the students. Once the word is read the teacher will tell the students to change one of the letter sounds to a

new one to create a new word. For example, “we have the word cat, change the word to “bat”. The teacher may also want to break down the word by letter sound, so the students know what letter they need to change to create the new word. This process can be repeated for as long as necessary by switching any three of the letters. Encourage students to create and name their own words for chaining.

Student Example

The students have a sound board in front of them with the word “cat” at the top.

Teacher: “We have to word “cat” let’s change it it “bat”. C-a-t to b-a-t.

Students will then look at the letters they have and notice that the first letter sound needs to be changed to create the new word.

Student: “We need to change the “c” to a “b”.

The student was able to identify the letter that needed to be changed by hearing the letter sound.

Related Resources

- [Phonics Activities that WORK! – Literacy Edventures](#)

76. Letter Sound Pop Its

COURTNEY DENMARK

Strategy Overview:

- Using a Pop It to teach letter sounds is a strategy where students are given a toy Pop It labeled with the 26 letters. They are then presented with different pictures of objects (or objects themselves) and are expected to push down the letter that the word begins with
- For example, if a student is presented with a kite, the word will be said out loud, and they will push down the bubble for “K”.
- This can be used as a small group activity during a literacy block to build phonics competencies. Students can have a collection of pictures (or objects) in a task box, and they can complete this activity without adult assistance as needed.
- Letter sounds are critical for decoding skills. Using this strategy helps students connect the letters they see to the sounds they hear, allowing them to grow as decoders and by association, readers. (Linnea, 2022).

Strategy in Action

Each student will be provided with Pop- It labeled with letters of the alphabet.. The teacher will present pictures, or objects for the letter sounds that are to be focused on that day. When students hear the word that is being

presented, they will use their knowledge of phonics to find the matching bubble and press it down. This will continue until all letters for the learning session have been completed.

Related Resources:

Linnea, C.E. (2022). What teachers need to know and do to teach letter-sounds, phonemic awareness, word reading, and phonics. *Reading Teacher*, 76(1), 53–61. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2095>

77. Pool Noodle Phonics

ELIZABETH BAROODY-SOLOMON

Strategy Overview

- An interactive method for studying phonics
- Great for active and kinesthetic learners
- Useful during a literary block when in stations
- According to Hornsby and Wilson (2014), students often experience phonics as “something done to them, rather than something to investigate.” Pool noodle phonics will have kids investigating and playing with sound!

Strategy in Action

Once students are in small groups, the teacher provides “pool noodle phonics” sets, which consist of alternating small rings of vowels and consonant on a paper towel stand or other sort of stick. Students will rotate the rings and pronounce the words together that they create. Depending on the age of the students, there could be a written component to this as well. If students are lower elementary age, the teacher and other adults will circulate to guide students as needed in their pronunciation as they create words.

Related Resources:

- [Pool Noodle Uses for the Classroom – 36 Brilliant Ideas \(weareteachers.com\)](http://weareteachers.com)

78. Tap it, Map it, Graph it, Zap it

EMILY MAHANY

Strategy Overview:

- The object of this game is to sound out the words the student is given. They will use problem solving skills to figure out how many sounds are in the word and then spell it out. They will then blend the word together.
- This is important because it shows students how to sound out words and sounds and blend sounds together to make words. It shows students how to chunk sounds together.
- This can be used as a station in your classroom. The teacher can have a group of students and give them a word and they can play this game.
- “Once children know the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they stand for, they’re ready to use those building blocks to read words and simple sentences. Building strong phonics skills in the early years of school is the key to your child becoming a strong, independent reader.” (Culbert, 2024)

Strategy in Action

Students are meeting with the teacher at the back table for word work. The students will get their sheets and put it

in their clear pockets. They will get a magnet, chips and a dry erase marker as well. The teacher will give a word such as “Turn”. The student will tap out three sounds in turn and place chips on 3 dots. They will then take the chips to the map section as they blend the sounds. They will then write the words in the appropriate sound boxes and then blend the word as they zap it with the magnet.

Related Resources:

- [Tap it, Map it, Graph it, Zap it! \(Sight Words\)](#)

References

Culbert, K. (2019, November 13). *Phonics: The most important skill that beginning readers learn.* Medium. <https://medium.com/@kfculbert/phonics-the-most-important-skill-that-beginning-readers-learn-b2c5425620dc>

79. Word Ladder

ISABELLE RITZ

Strategy Overview

Word Ladder is where students replace one letter in a word, rearrange the letters in the word, add or take away a letter in a word to create a new word. This helps them practice different ending sounds and vowel sounds within a word. Furthermore, they can see the relationships between letters and their sounds within a word. This can also introduce them to new vocabulary words and helps create steppingstones between words and their pronunciation. This activity can be used in the classroom during small group, whole group, or as an independent activity once students have learned the process. Word ladders offer many benefits one being, “students must link graphemes to phonemes and analyze written letter structures within possible words, as they discover the next word” ([Ray, 2024](#)). This forces students to critically think about the letter order in a word.

Strategy in Action

The teacher will model how word ladders work. The teacher will put a word up on the board. For example, “CAP” and say, “what word is this?” Students will say CAP. The teacher will change a vowel and say let’s sound out this

word C-O-P. The teacher will ask what word this is. Students will say COP. Teacher will change an ending letter to T. The word will read COT. The teacher will have students sound it out and then say it together. The process can continue EX:

COT to DOT to POT

OR

Tack to sack to pack to packing, etc.

References

Ray, S. P. (2024, April 28). *The benefits of utilizing word ladders to teach literacy skills – spelling, vocabulary, writing, fluency, comprehension*. The Literacy Brain. <https://theliteracybrain.com/2024/04/28/the-benefits-of-utilizing-word-ladders-to-teach-literacy-skills-spelling-vocabulary-writing-fluency-comprehension/>

80. Phonics Bingo

JANELLE SCOTT

Strategy Overview

A great strategy to use to incorporate these phonetic skills is Phonics Bingo to help your students differentiate between sounds, letters, and words and also blend and segment the sounds. The great thing about this game is that students must listen to the caller to know what square to cover on their Bingo board. Players must then be able to match what they hear to a word or picture. An important key of building on phonics is to have “planned hands-on experiences to generate oral language....lots of experiences with a variety of rhymes” (Wilson & Hornsby, 2014, p. 4).

Strategy in Action

This activity in a class of 20 kids can allow children the chance to build on the recognition as well as the oral aspect of phonics as the students can work in pairs or with a teacher as a whole class. The ability to manipulate this activity to fit the needs of each student makes it even more useful to utilize in the classroom. Utilizing these games in the classroom is a way for learning to be fun and has proven to have great results.

Student Example

Step 1:

Students are prompted with a letter sounds, letter combination, picture recognition

Step 2:

Students respond with the correlated answer to the prompted letter sound, letter combination, picture recognition with a token on the bingo board.

Teacher Tips:

- Prompt students with the appropriate phonic skills that need to be worked on for that specific lesson
- Allow students to respond orally after a couple minutes to check themselves

References

Hornsby, D., & Wilson, L. (2011). *Teaching phonics in context*. Pearson Australia.

81. Letter Swap

JILLIAN OWENS

Strategy Overview

- Students take turns removing one letter from a word and replacing it with another letter to create a new word.
- This game requires students to develop phoneme manipulation skills.
- This game can be adapted in many ways to challenge students as they begin to master phoneme manipulation.
- Phoneme manipulation skills help students recognize word structure (Storey, 2024).
- As students become fluent in phoneme manipulation, reading and spelling can become more automatic.

Strategy in Action

The teacher will write a three-letter word on a whiteboard. Students can take turns coming up and erasing a letter and then writing in a new letter. The teacher should encourage the students to read the new word that they created to the class. The first few times playing the game, the teacher may choose to suggest the new phoneme that they would like the student to use. As students begin to master this skill, they can be challenged to add letters to the word, without removing a letter to create four letter

words. The teacher may also choose to say the words out loud and complete the substitution without writing the words on a board. The teacher may also choose a word part to focus on substituting, for example only substitute the beginning sound of the word. Students can also work with a partner and take turns substituting letters. This can become a competition to see which partners can create the most words. Included in the related resources is an online version of this game that students can play independently.

Related Resources

- [50 Fun Phonics Activities | Savvas Learning Company](#)
- [Switch the Letter | Game | Education.com](#)
- [Phoneme Substitution \(wi.gov\)](#)

References

50 Fun Phonics Activities. Savvas Learning Company. (n.d). <https://www.savvas.com/resource-request/50-free-phonics>

Storey, M. (2024, January 31). *Should I teach phoneme manipulation?* Ascend Smarter Intervention. <https://www.ascendlearningcenter.com/blog-highlights/phoneme-manipulation>

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). Phoneme substitution. https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/ela/bank/RF_PA_Substitution.pdf

82. Goldfish Blends Sort

JULIANNE DARDIS

Strategy Overview

- Goldfish blends sort is a fun activity for students to work on isolating sounds within words.
- “Isolating initial consonant blends is a foundational phonics skill in helping children learn to read,” ([Cori, 2023](#)).
- Students are working hands-on with materials to enrich the learning experience.
- Goldfish and words can be targeted at goals for students and can be associated with the current lesson or module.
- This strategy is best suited for students grades 1-4. This strategy can be adapted for students of any level.

Strategy in Action

In goldfish blends sorting, students are tasked to take apart given words and figure out which fishbowl the fish belongs in. Students are given two or more fish bowls with one fish inside each bowl. The fish inside contains a beginning consonant blend. Students will also be given multiple goldfish containing words with and without the consonant blend that is in the fishbowl. Students will be responsible for sounding out and taking apart the goldfish word and determining which fishbowl the goldfish goes

into, if it goes into any of the fishbowls. This activity can be modified for students in grades 1-4. For younger grades, the goldfish in the fishbowl can contain the beginning consonant blend, and the sorting goldfish can have pictures on them. Students will sound out the word from the picture and determine the appropriate fishbowl.

Related Resources

- [Consonant Blends Fishbowl Sorting Activity. Teach Starter](#)

References

Cori. (2023, March 15). *Beginning blends isolation activities for the classroom*. Mrs. B's Beehive. <https://mrsbsbeehive.com/beginning-blends-isolation-activities-for-the-classroom/>

83. Bingo Wand & Chips

LAURA BYRD

Strategy Overview

This is an interactive, hands on activity to use with students who are practicing “tapping” words out. Students are able to physically move the chips as they tap each sound, and using the wand makes it fun and engaging!

Strategy in Action

In a small group, provide each student with Elkonin (sound) boxes, bingo chips and a wand. As you go through your word list, guide students through moving each chip into a box as they tap out the word. Once the word is built, glide the wand to simulate blending the word.

Student Example

Support students with the word “cat”:

Move one chip as you tap out /c/ /a/ /t/ Glide the wand over the chips to blend “cat”

Related Resources

- [Elkonin Boxes | Reading Rockets](#)
- [66 Word Families Lists To Help You Plan Your Phonics Lessons - Teach In The Heart Of Texas](#)

SKILL/COMPETENCY VI

FLUENCY

One of the biggest misunderstandings we see as teacher educators is the idea of fluency as simply reading quickly. Effective, fluent readers often interpret the text, reading with expression while demonstrating fluency. Thus, Lesaux and Carr (2024) describe fluency as “the ability to read connected text with accuracy, expression, and at an appropriate rate” (p. 3).

84. Fluency Story Cards

CAROLINE MASSARO

Strategy Overview

- Fluency Story Cards support students in practicing fluency.
- Fluency Story Cards can be implemented as a literacy center for students to engage with. There are a variety of cards with passages for students to read and practice their fluency skills based on student interests..
- This strategy relates to the “Big 6” skills & competencies as its discussed as “the ability to read connected text with accuracy, expression, and at an appropriate rate” (Lesaux & Carr, 2024, p. 3).

Strategy in Action

The teacher will explain to students the daily center rotation in the classroom for that specific day. For the fluency task cards center, students will be paired up to complete this activity. There are a variety of teacher created different Fluency Story Cards that students will read aloud. Repetition is key in this activity, as that promotes fluency. Having students read their cards several times is a way to practice their fluency skills. The partner will tell the story back to them and vice versa. This is an

interactive way for students to practice reading fluency and practice speaking and listening skills as well!

Tip to Increase Engagement: To create fluency story cards, use pop culture and student interests to help you create engaging story cards students will love to read

Consider using students favorite movie or tv characters or hobbies or interests as topics for the cards.

Related Resources

Lesaux, N.K., Carr, K.C. (2024). [Brief 1: Science of reading: What is it?](#) New York State Education Department.

85. Impression Reading

MATTHEW MALERBA

Strategy Overview

- Students read with a given mood or expression that is chosen for them upon a random spin of a wheel
- Reading with expression also helps with fluency. Using appropriate vocal inflection allows children to read faster and smoother, which helps prevent tripping on words or losing their place ([LeVos, 2022](#)).
- This will allow all students to be more engaged in material along with the reader.
- It's difficult to follow the storyline and pay attention when you're unsure of how the characters feel ([LeVos, 2022](#))
- Students enhance their pacing and accuracy of their reading skills

Strategy in Action

The teacher will create a wheel filled with different moods and expressions that will decide how the students are going to read a given piece of text. Students will take turns reading but with the expression that this wheel will choose for them. Before actually reading, the class will have a 30 second discussion on what characterizes the given expression that was landed upon. This will help the

reader get into character. Students will read their section in such a way that someone that was not a part of the class would easily recognize how the reader is reading. Afterwards, the teacher will bring the class together and they will discuss two major things that the reader did to exemplify their expression.

Student Example

The students propose ideas of expressions to be put onto the wheel, the teacher picks someone to read and follows by spinning the wheel, then the class discusses characterizations of the given expression, then the reader reads with the given expression, finally, the students lead a discussion about what the reader did effectively.

Related Resources:

- [Wheel of Names | Random name picker](#)

References

LeVos, J. S. (2022, May 5). *Reading with expression: A helpful guide for*

parents. Begin Learning. <https://www.beginlearning.com/parent-resources/reading-with-expression/>

86. Reader's Theatre

MADISON LONG

Strategy Overview

- Readers Theater is an incredible way for students to build on their fluency skills in reading and writing.
- This strategy allows for students to not only grow in their reading literacy development, but also in their communication and self confidence abilities.
- The benefits of this activity include “develop fluency through repeated exposure to text, increase comprehension, integrate reading, writing, speaking, listening in an authentic context, engage students, create confidence and improve the self-image of students, provide a real purpose for reading, provide opportunities for cooperative learning” ([Cornwell, n.d.](#)).

Strategy in Action

Readers Theatre is a highly motivational reading strategy that provides a context for authentic reading. Students read to convey meaning using their voice, facial expressions, and gestures. They also analyze and respond to literature and increase reading fluency. The only requirement is the script; costumes, props, and make-up are not necessary. ([Carrick, 2020](#))

Student Example

1. Students receive a copy of the specific script that educators have picked out for them.
2. Students begin to read through the script to have a general idea of the context of the story.
3. Students are casted in roles within the play, in order for the students to expand on their characterization and tones.
4. Students practice their parts to become more comfortable and confident with the performance.
5. It's performance time!

Related Resources

- [Reader's Theater | Reading Rockets](#)
- [Readers Theatre | Read Write Think](#)
- [Reader's Theater Teaching Strategy | Facing History & Ourselves](#)

References

Carrick, L. U. (2000). *The effects of readers theatre on fluency and comprehension on fifth grade students in regular classrooms*. Lehigh University. <https://preserve.lehigh.edu/lehigh-scholarship/>

[graduate-publications-theses-dissertations/theses-dissertations/effects-readers](#)

Cornwell, L. (n.d.). Understanding Readers Theater in Classrooms. *Scholastic*. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/136616261/What-is-Readers-Theater>

87. Choral Reading

SAMANTHA D'AMICO

Strategy Overview

- In choral reading, the teacher and students read short passages out loud and in unison.
- Why is this strategy effective? According to *The BeanStack Team* (2022), reciting the content out loud prior to solo reading “develops confidence, proficiency, and expertise in **oral language skills**.”
- Choral reading can be implemented in both small group or whole class settings.
- Prior to choral reading, the teacher reads the text and models appropriate fluency to students.

Strategy in Action

One example of how to use this strategy in the classroom is through the use of Big Books. The teacher displays the Big Book on an easel, and uses a pointer as she reads each word. First, she reads the book to students. Then, for the next reading of the book students join in and read in unison with their teacher. When the teacher feels that students are ready, students read in unison without teacher guidance.

Video Example

https://youtube.com/watch?v=o_-z8d0sRUA%3Fsi%3D5bFL0qQJj8gjSJbc

References

The Beanstack Team. (2022, September 8). [What is choral reading?](https://www.beanstack.com/blog/what-is-choral-reading). Beanstack. <https://www.beanstack.com/blog/what-is-choral-reading>

88. Reader's Theatre

SARAH SPINDLER

Strategy Overview

- “With reader’s theater students work together to present an oral reading of a script, typically adapted from literature, plays, or other written texts. Reader’s theater is an engaging activity used to promote reading fluency, especially oral expression” ([Reading Rockets](#)).
- This is important because rehearsal and repeated reading aid readers who struggle with fluency (Mraz et al., 2013).
- This can be used after reading a story; many readers theatre scripts are adapted from popular children’s books.

Strategy in Action

- A detailed description of this strategy is available at [ReadWriteThink](#).

Related Resources

- This site has a great set of instructions for implementing

Reader's Theatre: readingrockets.org/readers-theater

- Here is a website with dozens of free readers' theatre scripts: [Reader's theatre scripts](#)
- [Here](#) is a free script of the three Billy Goats Gruff. This PDF also includes masks that your actors can cut out and use as their costume.
- Here is a link to an RT version of The 4 Little Pigs. Masks are included here as well. [The 4 Little Pigs](#)

References

Mraz, M., Nichols, W., Caldwell, S., Beisley, R., Sargent, S., & Rupley, W. (2013). Improving oral reading fluency through readers theatre. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 52(2). https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol52/iss2/5

89. Scooping Phrases

CATHERINE MOEN

Strategy Overview

- Scooping phrases is an activity that has students grouping words together into phrases. "Children who read word by word instead of in phrases often struggle with making meaning from what they read" (Riley, 2024)
- Students can break these phrases down so that they can focus on how the words and phrases should sound when reading them. Students can make a scooping motion as well when practicing this activity to help with the visualization.
- Scooping phrases is important because it helps students to not just read one word at a time, but to read words more fluently which is the goal for when students are working on their fluency skills.
- Teachers can easily incorporate this activity into a literacy block by first explicitly teaching the strategy while reading a poem of text on chart paper or white board and then allowing for independent practice.

Strategy in Action

The teacher would start by teaching what scooping is. The teacher will explain that scooping phrases means that

students are reading a few words at a time that go together so that they can practice not reading only one word at a time creating a choppy sound. The teacher will even show the motion of scooping by taking their pointer finger and making a scooping motion, like they are scooping ice cream. From there, the teacher will give examples like “the small mouse” or “the black cat”. These small phrases help students with grouping words that go together and as well as having them practice reading fluency in small chunks. The teacher will then ask the students “who”, “what”, and “where” questions based on what the phrase is saying. This allows for further questioning and works on comprehension as well. The students would then look for the next phrase of the sentence. From there students will practice independently by reading these short phrases and building the sentences so that when it comes time to read complete sentences, they will have had experience reading shorter phrases fluently.

Related Resources:

- [How to Use the “Scoop + Phrase” Activity to Improve Fluency Phrasing – MsJordanReads](#)

90. Book Bistro

ELIZABETH BAROODY-SOLOMON

Strategy Overview:

Student-driven book selection, teacher-filtered:

- Engages students in reading of their choice
- Promotes reading a wide variety of texts
- Wonderful for reducing anxiety and stress around reading with laid-back, café style atmosphere
- Great complement to other activities during a literacy block
- Offers an opportunity for the reading community/classroom to celebrate together a few times a year in recognition of their reading achievement/increased fluency

Strategy in Action

This idea is based on story highlighted by NWP, or the National Writing Project. All credit goes to Ginette Rossi, who won the Arizona K-12 Humanities Educator Award for this project. Students read for 20 minutes at a time and celebrate their reading achievement at the end of each quarter with a celebration involving food and drink, hence the Bistro component. What a great way to build fluency and increase student engagement in reading!

Related Resources:

- [National Writing Project | Meet Ginette Rossi \(nwp.org\)](#)

91. Fluency Phones

EMILY MAHANY

Strategy Overview

- The use of Fluency Phones helps students hear themselves and decode words without disturbing others around them. They are a small tube that looks like a play phone. When you talk into them it echoes back into your ear.
- Fluency phones are important because when you hear yourself read something out loud it allows you to think about and absorb what you are reading. This is also important because when you are reading over your writing you are able to hear and consider if what you wrote makes sense.
- Fluency phones are helpful with guided reading, independent reading, and small group reading. “Fluency phones are a beneficial reading helper for kids because they encourage children to make their way through a story slowly. By staying present and focused on the reading activity, it can help students gain a better understanding of the material. This increased understanding can enhance their comprehension and future reading experiences.” (LearningLoft, 2019)

Strategy in Action

During independent worktime a student may come up and grab a fluency phone. The child can use this for

independently reading their book. This will encourage the student to slow down and comprehend what they are reading. They may also use it to check for sentence fluency in their writing. By using the whisper Fluency Phone the student can hear themselves say the sentence(s) they wrote out loud and listen to see if the sentence makes sense or needs something to make it better.

Student Example

Step 1: A student finishes a writing piece.

Step 2: Student grabs fluency phone to check their piece makes sense and fixes mistakes.

Related Resources

- [Benefits of Fluency Phones as a Reading Helper for Kids](#)

92. Timed Reading Contest (Against Yourself)

ISABELLE RITZ

Strategy Overview

Studies have shown that an “effective method of improving reading rate has been via timed readings, where learners focus on reading faster by silently reading short, highly comprehensible passages over regular intervals and answering comprehension questions about the texts” (Shimono, 2019, p. 141).

Timed reading contest (against yourself) is a great way for students to improve their reading rate. Timed reading is where students set an appropriate amount of time for themselves to read a text. Once the timer has finished, they should circle the last word they read. They should then re-read the passage to see if they can read at a faster rate. The student should circle the next last word they read in a different color, to see the difference. It is important to note that the student should not be reading too fast. This is important because it helps students set and reach their own fluency goals in regard to reading rate. As a reminder, it is important to work on all aspects of fluency not just speed. However, this reading contest activity provides a challenge for students making it an engaging activity. This is an activity that can be set up at the beginning of small group reading for 5 minutes or something that students can do during independent reading.

Strategy in Action

Teacher will hand out short passages to each student. Teacher will tell students, “Class you each will read a passage to see how many words we can read in a minute. When I say go you will flip the timer and read as many words as you can accurately. Once the timer ends you will circle the last word you read in a blue marker.” Student will perform the task. “Class time is up, you are going to read this passage again and see if you can read more words than before!” Teacher will give students another minute.

Related Resources

Lyne, L. (2016). Effects of explicit timing on elementary students’ oral reading rates of word phrases. In *A Cross Section of Educational Research: Journal Articles for Discussion and Evaluation* (pp. 138-144). Routledge.

References

Shimono, T. (2019). The effects of repeated oral reading and times reading on L2 oral reading fluency. *The Reading Matrix*, 19(1), 139-154.

93. Rhythm Walk

JANELLE SCOTT

Strategy Overview

A Rhythm walk is a movement that focuses on the fluidity, appropriate speed, and natural phrasing of fluent reading. As students repeat the walk, they demonstrate remarkable growth in their fluency, and as their confidence grows, they begin to add variety to their steps and move and read in creative ways.

Peebles ([2007](#)) shows the success and importance of this strategy by quoting Jensesn who says, “Therefore, incorporating the element of movement into fluency instruction has been pivotal in motivating my students to participate in the proven method of repeated reading. Not only are students keen to ‘get up and move,’ but also I believe movement conceptualizes the rhythmic nature of fluent, expressive reading and allows children to experience and “feel” how fluent reading should sound, while enhancing the learning process by stimulating the neural pathways responsible for retention and cognition” (p. 578).

Strategy in Action

Rhythm walks allow students to experience visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning through the use of the arts. The students will see the words in front of them. They will hear the words being stated. They will also read the

words out loud and speak to the rhythm of walking. Many children are hands-on learners and also learn best through play. This is a fun and creative way to improve children's fluency. Check out the link below to see how other teachers creatively used rhythm walks and how they imbed it into their own curriculum.

Student Example (from Patton, 2016, p. 48)

Before lesson begins, place the rhythm walk cards on the ground. To create rhythm walk cards, place one or two words on each card so that with each step the students will naturally read the words on the cards in a steady beat. The cards should be placed in order of where they appear in the poem. Say, "Today we are going to talk about the beat and rhythm of dance and reading." Ask, "Who can tell me what they know about the beat of music?"

Say, "The steady beat of music is like the heartbeat of a song. It's constant and steady and it keeps the song moving forward. Let's see if we can identify the beat in a few songs." Play a few songs and have the students tap their toes to the beat.

Say, "Now that we know how to find the beat of music, let's figure out what the difference is between beat and rhythm. What do we know about rhythm?"

Say, "The rhythm of a song may be the steady beat, but it could also be more individualized. Remember how we did stomp, clap, stomp, stomp, clap? We kept the beat going,

but we added a rhythm to it. Let's practice making some rhythms with our body. We will do an echo, I'll give you a rhythm, and then you'll do it back." Give three or four rhythms by patting knees, clapping, stomping, etc.

Say, "Now let's make a connection. How do these concepts relate to reading?"

Say, "When we read we want to keep a steady beat or rate. When we read at a good rate, it helps us better comprehend the text."

Teacher Tips:

- Allow students to move and connect with the rhythm so they are grasping the purpose and connection of rhythm to reading.

Related Resources

Haasch, A. L. R. (2016). *Teaching english rhythm: The importance of rhythm and strategies to effectively incorporate rhythm practice within content lessons*. School of Education and Leadership Student Capstone Theses and Dissertations, Article 4247.

https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_all/4247

Patton, N. (2016). *Fluency: A steady beat in the making*. Mahurin Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects, Paper 647.

https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/647

References

Peebles, J. L. (2007). Incorporating movement with fluency instruction: A motivation for struggling readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(6), 578–581. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.60.6.9>

94. Warm Up Phrases

JILLIAN OWENS

Strategy Overview

- Students will practice reading phrases, commonly found in texts, in one breath, prior to reading.
- Eventually, these phrases will become identifiable to students on sight, allowing them to read them with proper phrasing and expression.
- When students are able to automatically decode words and phrases, it assists fluency and comprehension, as students can focus on the text beyond decoding the words that they are reading (Green et al., 2024).

Strategy in Action

The teacher can choose phrases that either appear in texts often, or phrases that will appear in the text that the students will be reading that day. The teacher will give the students the list of phrases. Students will decode each word individually and then practice saying all of the words together in one breath. When students come across these words while reading, they should be able to recognize them and read them with correct phrasing and expression.

Related Resources

- [Fry Instant Phrases \(timrasinski.com\)](https://www.timrasinski.com)
- [What are Fry Words? – Think Tank Scholar](#)

References

Green, C., Keogh, K., & Prout, J. (2024). The cpb sight words: A new research-based high-frequency wordlist for early reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 78(1), 56–64. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2309>

95. Reading Buddies

JULIANNE DARDIS

Strategy Overview

- Reading buddies are a great tool for students to work on their reading skills in the classroom.
- Students will be reading aloud to their stuffed animals in the classroom.
- This strategy allows for students to apply their literacy skills when it comes to reading and fluency.
- “...stuffed animals make terrific listeners! They won’t interrupt, they maintain eye contact, and they don’t seem to intimidate or make the student nervous while reading which helps build student confidence,” (Belden, 2018).
- This strategy is best suited for younger students who are emergent readers.

Strategy in Action

During this strategy, students will practice their oral reading skills and their fluency skills while reading aloud to their stuffed animal friends. The teacher can provide stuffed animals to students, or the students can bring in their own from home. Students will use these stuffed animals as their “buddy” as they are reading aloud. “Reading aloud is a great technique to improve fluency and reading

skills. [According to recent research](#), reading aloud makes words easier to remember and helps children focus better on the material in front of them. However, not everyone enjoys reading aloud in front of other people. That's how a stuffed animal reading buddy can help," (The Zoo Factory, 2019). With this, we can see that using these reading buddies in the classroom can help students build their confidence with reading aloud while also working to improve their fluency skills. The fluency skills that students will be working on with this strategy are reading with accuracy, speed, and proper expression. While students are working on these skills with their reading buddy, the teacher should be continuously moving around the classroom and checking in with students as they are reading. The teacher should be making conversations with the students and making notes of what areas the student may need to improve on in their reading and checking in with students to see what areas of fluency may need to be reviewed as a whole.

Related Resources

- [5 Ways to Use Stuffed Animals in the Classroom](#)
- [Reading Buddies: How Stuffed Animals Can Help Your Child Read – The Zoo Factory](#)

References

Hendricks, D. (2018, March 7). *The little-known truths about reading*

aloud. The Science of Learning Blog. <https://www.scilearn.com/little-known-truths-about-reading-aloud/>

96. Predictable Chart Writing

LAURA BYRD

Strategy Overview

This strategy is designed for students with disabilities, but can be used in any classroom setting. The writing routine takes 15 minutes per day and follows the same cycle Monday- Friday every week ([Learning for All, n.d.](#))

Strategy in Action

Predictable Chart Writing can be used for any topic. Monday- have students complete a brainstorm of the topic. Tuesday- build sentences with a predictable starter (ex: I can, I see). Wednesday- write sentences on sentence strips and cut them up; students put their sentence back in order. Thursday- students will hand write their sentences and illustrate their paper. Friday- students will read their sentence(s) to the class. Encourage chart reading throughout the week.

Student Example

Topic: Zoo Animals

Sentences:

I see _____

I see _____

I see _____

Predictable sentence starter support fluency with reading.

Related Resources

- [Predictable Chart Writing](#)
- [Writing with Adults: Predictable Chart Writing – Jane Farrall Consulting](#)

References

Learning for All. (n.d.). *Predictable chart writing*. Literacy Instruction for Students with Significant Disabilities. <https://literacyforallinstruction.ca/shared-writing/>

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