1

Becoming Actively Engaged with Required Readings From Text

The purpose of reading is to understand, and it is through the active engagement of the reader with text that comprehension is most likely to occur (Block & Duffy, 2008). The skilled reader engages with text by using prior knowledge, asking questions, making inferences, monitoring understanding, and determining the importance of what is read (Pressley, 2002). An engaged reader also reflects on what has been read and applies ideas from the reading to new situations and other texts (Fox & Alexander, 2008). Through these active processes, the reader can fully understand a text (Pressley, 2006).

In this chapter you will experience firsthand the processes and benefits of being actively engaged with required texts for your course(s). By being actively engaged before, during, and after you read required texts, you will be able to prepare to read, think while reading, and reflect on what you have read. These active engagement strategies are important for elementary, middle, and high school students; however, even college-age or adult readers can benefit from applying them to their own reading (Nist & Simpson, 2000a). As you apply these active engagement strategies to your reading, you can expect to have a greater understanding of what you read.

The required readings from your course textbook and instructor presentations provide you with in-depth information about reading engagement. You will build on that knowledge as you work through the six strategies described within this Teaching Focus, strategies that can be used to increase reading engagement and understanding.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY	Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
Making Connections	●	●	●
Text Coding		●	●
Double Entry Journal		●	●
3-2-1		●	●
Teachers as Readers			●
Alpha Boxes			●

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 1.1

Making Connections

▶ Rationale

Before and during the reading process, readers use their previous experiences and prior knowledge to engage with, understand, and interpret text. People's brains structure memories of their previous experiences and knowledge into schemata (Rumelhart, 1980) that can be recalled when engaging in new experiences or reading new material. More specifically, readers use their schemata to help them interpret new fiction and nonfiction texts (Rumelhart, 1980). For example, memories of their interactions with a variety of people help readers understand a character's motivation in a fictional text; similarly, prior knowledge of computer terminology helps them comprehend the instructions for a new piece of software. In-depth schemata about a topic, event, or character in a text foster a high level of engagement that, in turn, can also stimulate informed, reflective thinking about the text (Pearson, Hansen, & Gordon, 1979).

One way you can activate and use your schemata while reading is through making connections (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). The Making Connections strategy helps you make three different types of meaningful associations with a text (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). First, you can make Text-to-Self Connections when you relate your personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings to what you are reading. You can make a second type of connection, a Text-to-Text connection, when you note similarities and differences between the text you are reading and previously read texts. Finally, you can make Text-to-World connections when you go beyond your own personal experiences and relate the text to global issues, events, and people. As you complete your required readings, you can use the Connections Chart to apply the Making Connections strategy. By documenting several connections between your schemata and the text, you not only enhance your engagement with and understanding of the text, you also add depth to your schemata about the topic(s) being discussed (Rumelhart, 1980).

▶ Procedures

1. For this strategy use the following chapter, part of a chapter, or article:

   _____

2. Preview the text by looking at the title, headings, visuals, and captions. Consider what you think the text will be about and what you already know about that topic.

3. As you read, some ideas will trigger a memory of a previous experience (Text-to-Self connection: TS), a text you have previously read (Text-to-Text connection: TT), or an event currently taking place in the world (Text-to-World connection: TW).

4. Mark each idea that triggered a connection with a sticky note and label each note with the type of connection you made (TS, TT, TW). Then jot down a few words to help you remember the exact connection that you made.

5. When you complete the reading, return to your first sticky note and begin to fill in the Connections Chart (Figure 1.1A). (See Figure 1.1B for a sample completed Connections Chart.) Record the excerpt from the text (and the page number) that caused you to make that first connection in the first column. In the second column, write your connection to that excerpt. You may want to use a sentence stem such as "This reminds me of . . . " to begin your connection explanation. In the third column, note the type of connection you made for that excerpt.

6. Follow the steps outlined in number 5 to document the other excerpts you marked with sticky notes. If you marked numerous excerpts, select five significant connections to enter on the Connections Chart.

7. Include at least one example of each type of connection. You will probably find it easier to make Text-to-Self and Text-to-Text connections. However, it is important to be able to relate your reading beyond your personal and educational experiences. If you did not mark any Text-to-World Connections as you read, reflective thinking about the material should result in some Text-to-World Connections.

8. When you come to class, the Connections Chart can form the basis of the discussion about the assigned reading. You may work in small groups where members share examples of each type of connection, or your instructor may lead a whole class discussion during which you and your classmates are asked to share a specific type of connection or a connection to specific excerpts. When you listen to several Text-to-Self connections related to the same section of text, you can see how differences in prior knowledge and experiences affect the connections that are made. Discussion of Text-to-Text connections provides opportunities for you and your peers to review important ideas from the text, and the sharing of Text-to-World connections reminds you that the ideas presented in the reading have importance beyond your own personal and professional life.

FIGURE 1.1A *Connections Chart*

Text-to-Self	Text-to-Text	Text-to-World
Excerpt from Text (and page number)	That reminds me of . . .	Type of Connection ▪ Text-to-Self ▪ Text-to-Text ▪ Text-to-World

FIGURE 1.1B *Sample Completed Connections Chart*

Text-to-Self	Text-to-Text	Text-to-World
Excerpt from Text (and page number)*	That reminds me of . . .	Type of Connection ■ Text-to-Self ■ Text-to-Text ■ Text-to-World
"Literature-based reading programs have the potential for success with all types of students, but particularly with struggling readers like Dan and Michael, who can easily slip through the cracks without a supportive environment for literacy development." (p. 391)	*When I saw this quote, it reminded me of when I was young and having a hard time with reading. My teacher introduced me to the <u>Little House on the Prairie</u> books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and that made a difference for me. I started reading and enjoying it. Literature made a difference for me.*	*Text-to-Self*
"The collection needs to include nonfiction. Students from all grades should have access to a wide selection of high-quality information books." (p. 395)	*Reading about informational books reminded me of an article I read called "Struggling Readers Get Hooked on Writing." This article talked about how struggling readers enjoy informational books. They liked these books because they are organized, visually appealing, interesting, real, and easy to write about.*	*Text-to-Text*
"Access to books in classroom libraries impacts students reading." (p. 400)	*This quote reminded me that wealthy districts have an abundance of resources, including a variety of reading materials. These schools, for the most part, score high on standardized tests and receive a lot of funding through property taxes from wealthy homeowners, local businesses, and industries. The less wealthy districts do not have an abundance of resources or a variety of books. These schools are still expected to do well on standardized tests, but they do not have the funding for the materials they need to teach reading. I don't think this makes sense; I'm upset about how schools are funded in our state.*	*Text-to-World*

*Quotes from: Vacca, J. L., Vacca, R. T., Gove, M. K., Burkey, L. C., Lenhart, L. A., & McKeon, C.A. (2009). *Reading and learning to read* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

▶ Applying the Making Connections Strategy in K–8 Classrooms

- Modeling each type of connection is of critical importance.

  - You can orally model Text-to-Self connections when reading aloud to your students. Starting these connections with "That reminds me of" helps your students learn how to use that sentence stem when they share connections to their own experiences and feelings.

  - Text-to-Text connections can be modeled during an author study where you help students discover the associations across multiple texts written by the same author. For example, when you and your intermediate students read books written by Patricia Polacco, you may note that several of those books focus on how the positive actions of one person can have far-reaching consequences. You can also model Text-to-Text connections while teaching a thematic unit that includes multiple texts on the same topic. For example, if your students read texts such as *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989), *Twenty and Ten* (Bishop, 1978), and *Friedrich* (Richter, 1961), you can help them see the connections among the brave acts performed by the main characters in each novel.

  - Children often find it difficult to make Text-to-World connections because they may have limited knowledge of the world beyond their lives, families, school, and community. You can help students develop the schemata they need to make Text-to-World connections by sharing current events and historical information. In addition, you can explicitly discuss many Text-to-World connections related to specific materials the class is reading before you ask them to make similar connections.

- When you introduce the Connections Chart, model each step of the process—from the placing of the sticky notes while reading to the transferring of the excerpts and the ideas from the sticky notes to the appropriate sections of the chart. After modeling, you can help students more fully understand the process by facilitating several small or whole group Connection Chart activities during which students provide examples from their own sticky notes. These modeling and guided practice experiences will enable your students to feel confident about completing Connections Charts with a partner or independently.

▶ Adaptations for ELLs

- It will be easier for English language learners (ELLs) to make Text-to-Self connections if they read culturally relevant texts, that is, texts related to their racial/ethnic/cultural group.

- As an early guided-practice activity with ELLs, you may want to read aloud a text and then ask the ELLs to reread one or two specific passages that you feel will stimulate the making of good connections. This type of rereading allows them to concentrate their reading and thinking on a small part of the text, rather than becoming overwhelmed by the task of choosing several ideas from an entire text.

■ Limit the number of connections that ELLs are expected to transfer from their sticky notes to the Connection Chart. It may take them longer to formulate clear sentences about their connections than their classmates who are native English speakers.

■ Provide extra opportunities for ELLs to hear the Text-to-World connections of their classmates before they are expected to develop their own Text-to-World connections. Listening to the Text-to-World connections of others will enhance their schemata for history and current events as well as provide them with models for orally presenting their own Text-to-World connections.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY **1.2**

Text Coding

▶ **Rationale**

As students read their assignments for class, their main purpose for reading is to learn new information and incorporate that new information into their prior knowledge about the topic (Nist & Simpson, 2000a). To achieve this purpose, some learners find that highlighting the text, taking notes, and underlining key phrases help them become actively engaged with the text so they can understand and remember what they have read (Nist & Simpson, 2000b). The Text Coding strategy (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007), which involves making short, explicit notes during the reading of a text, helps learners think, question, and reflect as they read.

As you read your assigned texts, you will encounter ideas that seem important, are interesting, or raise questions. Sometimes, you will find yourself disagreeing with ideas or relating them to ideas you have read about in other texts. Marking these ideas with specific codes that explain the reasons why you selected them increases your engagement with the text and enables you to capture your in-depth thinking in writing. By using the Text Coding strategy (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007), you will not only enhance your engagement with and understanding of text, you will also be more prepared for class discussions related to the readings. During those discussions, as you share your codes and listen to the explanations of others' codes, you will continue to examine multiple aspects of the readings, fostering even deeper engagement and understanding.

▶ **Procedures**

1. For this strategy use the following chapter, part of a chapter, or article:

_____

2. As you read the text, specific ideas will catch your attention. Use text coding to mark these ideas so you can share them during the next class discussion.

3. The ideas you want to remember often fall into one of six categories. The following list includes the categories, the category descriptions, and the symbols to use when coding:

Important (★)	You believe this is an important idea in relation to the topic.
Interesting (I)	While this idea may not be of high importance, it has captured your interest.
Connection (C)	You can make a personal connection to this idea, or this idea is connected to another text you have read or a previous discussion in class.
Question (?)	This idea leaves a question in your mind. For example, the meaning may be unclear, you may wonder about the author's intent when he or she wrote this idea, or the idea raises a new question for you.
Agree (A)	You agree with this idea and want to discuss why.
Disagree (D)	You disagree with this idea and want to discuss why.

4. You may want to write directly in the margins of the text, or you may wish to affix sticky notes next to the ideas you've selected. See Figure 1.2 for an example of text coding.

5. In addition to the code, write a phrase or sentence to help you remember why you selected the specific code for that idea. For example, if you marked an idea or passage with a question mark (?), you might want to write the question that arose as you read that passage.

6. Use each code at least once. You will probably insert some codes as you read the text the first time; these codes will designate aspects of the text that have caused a strong emotional reaction. You can also add codes when you reread sections of the text that need a second, more reflective examination.

7. When you come to class, your instructor may ask you to share your selected passages with a peer, a small group, or the whole class. When sharing, remember to discuss the reasons why you coded the text the way you did. You may discover that your peers have coded the same idea differently from the way you coded it; listening to their reasons will encourage you to consider different interpretations and insights. In addition, you may find that your peers and instructor have coded different ideas from the ones you selected; their comments about those ideas will foster additional reflection about the material.

▶ Applying the Text Coding Strategy in K–8 Classrooms

■ The Text Coding strategy can be used across the grade levels with fiction and nonfiction texts.

■ With young students, model each code one at a time and provide guided practice opportunities during shared reading or guided reading.

FIGURE 1.2 *Sample of Text Coding*

"Schools differ in how much time is allocated for reading and language arts instruction. Some set aside an hour and others set aside 3 hours each day. Even the various school reform models and instructional programs vary in the time recommended for reading and language arts instruction. One current high-visibility reading program suggests a 2½-hour daily reading instructional block. Another requires a daily minimum of 90 minutes of reading lessons, with additional tutoring for children lagging behind. Both these programs are touted as successful 'code-emphasis' programs, but many folks seem not to have noticed that substantial allocations of instructional time for reading are at the core of both programs. Both of these programs provide more opportunities for children to read than do other core reading programs (Brenner & Hiebert, 2010). These programs have been promoted as though there was some secret to success in the materials and methods they employ. However, virtually any reading intervention that reliably increases time engaged in reading should be expected to lead to achievement gains. In other words, what sometimes seems like evidence that a particular method or material produces higher achievement may actually be evidence that increasing reading volume positively affects reading achievement" (pp. 54–55).

? *What are these "high-visibility" reading programs?*

C *My clinical classroom has a 90-minute reading block, with each student reading for at least 30 minutes of that block.*

I *Time reading seems to be the most important factor! I'll be sure to keep that in mind when I begin teaching.*

Source: Allington, Richard L., *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-Based Programs*, 3rd edition, © 2012. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

■ You may add or eliminate codes as appropriate for the level of the student or genre of text. For example, beginning first-grade students may be taught to use only two codes while reading their picture books; they could code the most important part with an exclamation mark and their favorite part with a smiley face. When reading realistic fiction chapter books, older students might select one character and use the code PT to mark passages that reveal the character's personality traits. Students can write the trait being represented after the code, such as PT-Bravery or PT-Selfishness.

■ As students become proficient with text coding, allow them to suggest additional codes. You may choose to incorporate some of the student-created codes into future text coding activities.

▶ Adaptations for ELLs

■ Following the initial modeling and guided practice, ELLs will benefit from text coding with a partner. After reading each page, the two students can discuss which code or codes they might apply to that page. While the codes they propose may not be the same, this partner work provides ELLs with an opportunity to talk through their ideas with one peer before they share their ideas in a small group or with the whole class.

▪ ELLs might feel more confident explaining their codes if they write their original explanations of codes in their home language. Then they could work with a peer or adult to transfer those ideas into English before sharing them in a small group or whole class setting.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 1.3

Double Entry Journal

▶ Rationale

Writing helps you "learn, understand, remember and figure out what you don't yet know" (Elbow, 1994, p. 1). Through writing, the learner is able to think aloud on paper (Zinsser, 1993); therefore, writing promotes both thinking and learning. Reading and writing are complementary processes, and when they are used together, they promote engagement with text and retention of ideas and information (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Santa & Havens, 1991).

When you read required texts for class, it is helpful if you link writing to your reading process. The double entry journal is a useful strategy that promotes engagement with text by connecting reading and writing (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008). To complete a double entry journal, you need to read the text closely to identify and select a quote, word, phrase, or concept from the text that is important or confusing (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007). You then reflect on the information pulled from the text by writing a note that shows your reactions, connections, and inferences related to the excerpt you selected (Alvermann, Swafford, & Montero, 2004). This synthesis of ideas promotes active engagement and rich understanding of text (Nugent & Nugent, 1987).

▶ Procedures

1. For this strategy, use the following chapter, part of a chapter, or article:

   _____

2. Write in a double entry journal as you complete an assigned reading for your methods class.

3. Use Figure 1.3A or take a sheet of notebook paper and fold it in half lengthwise to form two columns. Write the word *Quote* at the top of the left column and the word *Note* at the top of the right column.

4. Select at least three important quotes, excerpts, phrases, or concepts from the text. Copy them into the "Quote" column.

5. For each quote, write your reaction, connection, inference, or insight in the "Note" column. This writing should focus on your thinking about what you

have written in the "Quote" column. See Figure 1.3B for a sample completed double entry journal.

6. When you come to class with your double entry journal for the assigned reading, your instructor may provide time for you to share your writing with a partner or small group, or you may be asked to share pieces of your journal entries as the class engages in a whole group discussion. Your instructor may collect your double entry journal to write comments back to you.

▶ Applying the Double Entry Journal Strategy in K–8 Classrooms

■ Your students will benefit from you modeling how to select appropriate "quotes" and how to write "notes" prior to being asked to complete these tasks on their own. You can use a think aloud approach to demonstrate how to select a meaningful quote or excerpt. Then you can demonstrate the type of thinking and writing required by talking through your thought processes while writing your notes.

■ The Double Entry Journal strategy works well for both fiction and informational texts in grades 3–8. It is most helpful to model the Double Entry Journal strategy with the type of text (i.e., fiction or information) that the students will be using.

▶ Adaptations for ELLs

■ ELLs benefit from additional teacher modeling of writing in a double entry journal. You can demonstrate the process by thinking aloud each step of selecting the "quote" and writing the "note" as you record the entry on the whiteboard for the students to see.

■ Some ELLs may find the processes involved with the double entry journal complicated and confusing. To streamline the strategy, you may choose an excerpt or quote for the "Quote" part of the double entry journal and ask the ELLs to write their ideas in the "Note" column.

■ You can pair an ELL with a partner so that both students can work on the process of selecting a "quote" and writing a "note" as a team. Through this type of discussion process, ELLs can develop greater understanding of the content as well as the process of selecting a "quote" and writing a "note".

▶ Assessment Idea

■ Double entry journals are tools designed to help students think deeply about text by linking reading and writing; thus, many teachers do not grade them. To ensure that students write their entries, teachers may choose to record a check mark (✓) if students complete the double entry journal on time and a minus (−) if they do not. If teachers wish to provide feedback on the quality of the entries, they may do so using a rubric such as the one provided in Figure 1.3C.

FIGURE 1.3A *Double Entry Journal*

Quotes	Notes

FIGURE 1.3B *Sample Completed Double Entry Journal*

Quotes*	Notes
"We believe a rich literacy environment is as essential in grade 6 as it is in the primary grades." (p. 159)	*I think it is a very important idea to keep in mind no matter what grade you plan to teach. I feel as though the ball gets dropped with older students in regard to the importance of literacy instruction and environment in the classroom. I believe students at all ages need to be taught continuously in a literacy-rich environment in all content areas. I learned in my middle school course that many students begin to lose enthusiasm for reading and school in the upper elementary and middle school grades. I think teachers must have excellent classroom libraries and provide time for students to read and discuss books they choose to read so they develop positive attitudes toward reading and learning. I also think that the rich literacy environment needs to have books, magazines, newspapers, and online texts on subjects and topics the students are interested in learning and reading about. I can't just have books that I like in my classroom. I need to have things that my students will find interesting and exciting.*
"When you ask children to work with any text you will need to consider the difficulty of the text, as well as the students' reading abilities, background knowledge of the content, and motivation and interest to read the text." (p. 184)	*This is something that is often overlooked when some teachers pick out texts for their students to read in class. I think that many teachers just put literature in front of their students and ask them to read it but they never look it over to make sure that it is at an appropriate level for their students. We need to make sure that all of these criteria have been met before we present our students with reading material.*

*Quotes from: Alvermann, D. E., Swafford, J., & Montero, M. K. (2004). *Content area literacy instruction for the elementary grades*. Boston: Pearson.

FIGURE 1.3C *Double Entry Journal Rubric*

Basic	Developed
Includes at least one "quote" and "note."	Includes more than one "quote" and "note."
The "note" restates or summarizes an idea from the quote or provides a general comment.	The "note" provides good insight, deep thinking, meaningful connections, and/or specific reactions.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY **1.4**

3–2–1 Strategy

▶ Rationale

Engagement with text does not automatically occur as a person looks at words on a page; rather, engaged reading is a deliberate act of making meaning that can be taught and practiced. When readers have a purpose for reading, summarize what they read, think about what they are reading, and ask themselves questions as they read, they are reading actively. These processes can be taught separately, but the real value lies in using the processes in tandem. The 3-2-1 strategy incorporates summarizing, thinking about text, and questioning into a single instructional activity that can be applied to fiction or nonfiction texts (Zygouris-Coe, Wiggins, & Smith, 2004/2005).

The 3-2-1 strategy has three main components: summarizing 3 important ideas from the text, identifying 2 interesting or intriguing parts of the text, and asking 1 question about the text. As you read an assignment for class, you will find that the 3-2-1 strategy gives you a clear set of purposes for your reading (i.e., summarizing key ideas, identifying interesting parts, and asking a question), which promotes your engagement with the text. The 3-2-1 strategy also helps you take the stance of an active reader focused on understanding the text.

▶ Procedures

1. For this strategy, use the following chapter, part of a chapter, or article:

2. As you are reading the assigned text, think about the prompts from the 3-2-1 chart shown in Figure 1.4A.

3. After you complete your reading assignment, record your ideas on the 3-2-1 sheet. As you think about the 3 things you discovered, concentrate on key ideas from the text. This part of the 3-2-1 strategy focuses on summarizing big ideas from the text, so be sure not to focus on minor details. As you identify 2 interesting items to record on the chart, select ideas that are personally interesting or intriguing to you. Finally, when you record the 1 question you still have related to the reading assignment, focus on a question that is meaningful to you and your understanding of the text. See Figure 1.4B for a sample completed 3-2-1 sheet.

4. Bring your completed 3-2-1 chart to class and be prepared to discuss your ideas in small groups or with the whole class. Some instructors may also collect your 3-2-1 chart so they can read and respond to your comments.

▶ Applying the 3-2-1 Strategy in K–8 Classrooms

■ This strategy can be done orally with young children or when only a short amount of time is available. You can prompt students to think of ideas in their heads and then have them share their ideas orally with a partner or with the whole group.

■ This strategy is easy to teach to parents at conferences or at open houses. Parents can then use the strategy orally with their children to check for comprehension.

▶ Adaptations for ELLs

■ The 3-2-1 strategy can be made more specific if you define the prompts in relation to the specific assigned text. For example, Figure 1.4C shows the prompts that you can use when ELLs read a text about storms.

■ ELLs may be able to respond to the 3-2-1 prompts more successfully if they are offered choices in response format. For example, some ELLs may prefer to draw their responses, use gestures or movement, write their responses, or share them orally. When you provide choices in response format, ELLs can show what they know even when they may not have developed the English language skills to explain it fully.

■ Provide additional wait time for ELLs so they can formulate their responses before sharing them orally.

■ Facilitate the discussion so that ELLs listen to several of their peers share their responses to the 3-2-1 prompts first. Hearing how their peers have responded helps ELLs formulate their ideas and responses.

FIGURE 1.4A *3-2-1 Chart*

3-2-1 Chart
Student Name:
Text You Read:

3 things you discovered	▪
	▪
	▪
2 interesting ideas	☆
	☆
1 question you still have	?

FIGURE 1.4B *Sample Completed 3-2-1 Chart*

3-2-1 Chart	
Student Name: Emily Walters	
Text You Read: Chapter 3, "Meeting the Literacy Needs of Diverse Learners"	
3 things you discovered	■ *Not all struggling readers and writers have the same difficulties. It is important to look at each struggling reader or writer as an individual.* ■ *Teacher modeling, explicit instruction, and practice are generally parts of effective instruction for diverse readers and writers.* ■ *All classrooms have diverse readers and writers—no matter what grade you teach or what type of school you teach in!*
2 interesting ideas	➢ *The sheltered English adaptations seem great for helping English language learners make progress, but I have not seen this approach in my clinical experiences yet. I want to ask my cooperating teacher if she has ever used this approach.* ➢ *The classroom example of how to use differentiated instruction is a great way to think about teaching struggling readers and writers. I think this model could help some of the students in my clinical classroom to make progress toward becoming independent readers and writers.*
1 question you still have	? *As a beginning teacher, what are the most important things I should do (or that I'll be able to do) to help the diverse students in my classroom?*

Text: Vacca, J. L., Vacca, R. T., Gove, M. K., Burkey, L. C., Lenhart, L. A., & McKeon, C. A. (2009). *Reading and learning to read* (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

FIGURE 1.4C *3-2-1 Chart for Storms*

3-2-1 Chart	
Student Name:	
Text You Read:	
3 things you discovered about the types of storms	
2 interesting ideas about how storms form	
1 question you still have about storms	

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY **1.5**

Teachers as Readers (TAR)

▶ Rationale

Literature circles and book clubs have become quite popular during the past decade (Daniels, 2001). This type of book discussion group is designed so readers can share their reactions and insights about books or other texts with their peers. As readers prepare for a book group, they read carefully and write notes about their ideas related to the text. When book groups meet, readers converse with their peers, listen to their peers' ideas about the text, discuss various perspectives and interpretations, consult the text to support ideas, and enrich their comprehension and connections with the text (Daniels, 2001). Through these processes, readers actively engage with and reflect on their reading (Raphael, Pardo, & Highfield, 2002).

Book clubs for teachers provide a framework for educators to read and discuss professional literature (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007). These book groups are called Teachers as Readers (TAR) groups (NCTE Teachers as Readers Committee, 1997). TAR participants read and discuss professional literature as a form of professional development. TAR groups also allow teachers to be part of a community of learners who support each other's professional development and practice (Commeyras, Bisplinghoff, & Olson, 2003). If you and your classmates participate in a TAR group, you will be able to experience the many benefits of such groups. For example, you may find that you are more motivated to read and reflect on the text, to consider multiple perspectives, and to build a collegial relationship with your peers (NCTE Teachers as Readers Committee, 1997). In short, through participation in TAR groups, you will find that you have taken the stance of an active reader who is engaged with the text, its ideas, and related applications (Vardell & Jacobson, 1997).

▶ Procedures

1. For your TAR group, use the following chapter, part of a chapter, or article:

   _____

2. Read the assigned text and prepare your Debriefing/Discussion sheet (see Figure 1.5A). Complete this step as a homework assignment. See a sample completed TAR Debriefing/Discussion sheet in Figure 1.5B.

3. At your next class session, you and your classmates will divide into groups of three or four members. You will need to bring the assigned text and your Debriefing/Discussion sheet to your TAR group meeting.

4. TAR discussions for professional journal articles typically last 15 to 20 minutes. If you are discussing a book or a long chapter, it may take 30 minutes or longer.

5. Use your Debriefing/Discussion sheets as a starting point for your TAR group discussion. For example, begin with each group member sharing his or her response to prompt 1. "Consider how you would rate the text on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). Explain." Continue to discuss the text by having all group members share their ideas and insights.

6. After the TAR group meeting is finished, complete the group evaluation items on the bottom of the Debriefing/Discussion sheet to reflect on the TAR group experience and to share feedback with your instructor about the TAR process.

7. If time permits, your instructor may ask TAR groups to share key ideas from their discussions with the whole class.

▶ Applying the Teachers as Readers Strategy in K–8 Classrooms

■ The format and purposes of TAR groups are very similar to literature circles or book clubs that can be implemented in K–8 classrooms. If you wish to use literature circles or book clubs with students, the following resources will provide helpful information about implementing them in the K–8 classroom:

Daniels, H. (2001). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups* (2nd ed.). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Raphael, T. E., Pardo, L. S., & Highfield, K. (2002). *Book club: A literature-based curriculum* (2nd ed.). Lawrence, MA: Small Planet Communications.

▶ Adaptations for ELLs

■ Provide book choices that are culturally relevant for ELLs so they will have background knowledge to help them read and understand the book.

■ Some ELLs may find it difficult to participate in a large group for book discussions; therefore, you may want to form groups that have no more than three members so that ELLs have many opportunities to share and ask questions with their classmates.

■ If the ELLs in your classroom are at the early stages of acquiring English, you may wish to read and talk through the text with them prior to having them participate in a book discussion group. Doing so will help build their comprehension, familiarize them with the key vocabulary, and increase their confidence for participating in a book discussion with their peers.

■ You may wish to have the ELLs in your classroom begin doing book discussions with shorter texts so that they can become familiar and comfortable with the structure and process. Short stories or articles work well in this situation.

FIGURE 1.5A   *Teachers as Readers (TAR) Debriefing/Discussion Sheet*

Name _____   Text _____

Debriefing and Discussion Ideas (Be sure to note page numbers to tie your ideas to the text):

1. Consider how you would rate the text on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). Explain.

2. Write down something important to share with your TAR group.

3. Describe how the text relates to your clinical classroom or other professional experiences.

4. Write down any questions you are still considering related to the text.

5. Write at least one sentence you want to collect for future reference (e.g., favorite sentence or phrase that affects your thinking).

After your TAR group meets, evaluate your TAR in the following areas:

   ▪ Something our TAR group did well today:

   ▪ Something our TAR group from today needs to work on:

FIGURE 1.5B *Sample Teachers as Readers (TAR) Debriefing/ Discussion Sheet*

Name *Mary Turner*   **Text** *"She's my best reader" article*

Debriefing and Discussion Ideas (be sure to note page numbers to tie your ideas to the text):

1. Consider how you would rate the text on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). Explain.

   9– The article was interesting, and it helped me understand how fluency and comprehension are linked but not the same thing.

2. Write down something important to share with your TAR group.

   Why is so much emphasis placed on fluency, especially rate, if it is not the real goal of reading?

3. Describe how the text relates to your clinical classroom or other professional experiences.

   In my last clinical I helped do 1 minute fluency checks with students. I now know that we should have looked at comprehension too.

4. Write down any questions you are still considering related to the text.

   As a beginning teacher, how can I assess students' comprehension? The example in the article seems complicated.

5. Write at least one sentence you want to collect for future reference (e.g., favorite sentence or phrase that impacts your thinking).

   P. 520 "In the cases of many of the children we assessed, it will be a daunting task to reassemble the pieces and help them to become the thoughtful and intelligent readers we need them to be."

*** After your TAR group meets, evaluate your TAR in the following areas:

■ Something our TAR group did well today:

   We were all prepared, and we listened to each other's ideas with open minds.

■ Something our TAR group from today needs to work on:

   We got off-task a few times so we can work on that.

Text: Applegate, M., Applegate, A. J. & Modla, V. B. (2009). "She's my best reader: She just can't comprehend." Studying the relationship between fluency and comprehension. *The Reading Teacher, 62,* 512–521.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY **1.6**

Alpha Boxes

▶ Rationale

Reading is an active process that involves transaction among the reader, the text, and the context (Rosenblatt, 1978). Readers understand texts based on the background knowledge or schema, stance, purpose, and goal they bring to the reading situation. In addition, the readers' personal goals, values, and beliefs (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) influence whether engagement with text occurs. Educators can promote reading engagement by creating a classroom environment and instruction that actively involve students with text, ideas, and their peers (Guthrie & Ozgungor, 2002).

As you read required texts for class, it is critical that you become engaged with those texts. By engaging with text, you are thinking as you read, which results in good comprehension (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The Alpha Boxes strategy (Hoyt, 2009; Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009) is a postreading strategy that can be used to help you reflect on key ideas from your assigned reading by identifying concepts, connections, and examples that correspond to each letter of the alphabet. Because you must identify at least one idea related to each letter of the alphabet, you are challenged to move beyond the first few thoughts that pop into your head to ideas that require deep thinking, revisiting the text, and connecting your prior knowledge and experience to the text (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007). The Alpha Boxes process encourages you to think deeply, considering which aspects of your reading were most important and summarizing key ideas (Hoyt, 2009), which leads to rich comprehension (Block & Mangieri, 1996). When you share your Alpha Boxes in class, you become a participant in a meaningful discussion that allows you to learn from and with your peers.

▶ Procedures

1. For the Alpha Boxes strategy, use the following chapter, part of a chapter, or article:

    _____

2. After you read the assigned text, fill in your Alpha Box sheet (see Figure 1.6A) with at least one idea per letter. As you fill out the sheet, you can use key vocabulary terms; important strategies; and concepts, connections, and examples related to the assigned reading. Remember to include a short note and/or page number from the text to help you remember why you selected the idea. See Figure 1.6B for a sample completed Alpha Boxes sheet.

3. When you come to class with your completed Alpha Boxes sheet, you and your classmates will create a class Alpha Box display to help you reflect on what you read and learned. The Alpha Box display will also show the group's knowledge, ideas, and connections.

4. Your instructor will randomly assign letters by having each class member choose an index card with a letter written on it.

5. Prepare a display page for the letter you selected that contains the letter, idea (with brief note and/or page number), and a visual (related to the idea). See Figure 1.6C for a sample page.

6. Starting with the letter A and continuing through the alphabet, each class member shares her or his sheet, explaining the idea, why it was selected, and what the visual represents. After a sheet is shared for each letter, your instructor may ask others in the class for additional ideas for that letter.

7. Your instructor may ask you to post the sheets to make a display on the classroom wall or bulletin board.

▶ Applying the Alpha Boxes Strategy in K–8 Classrooms

■ This strategy works well as a culminating activity related to a text or unit of study. It can also be used as a prereading activity for students to brainstorm ideas they already know about a topic to be studied.

■ If there are more than 26 students in a class, you may make duplicate letter cards for common letters such as m, s, and t. If there are fewer than 26 students in a class, you may eliminate less common letters such as j, q, and z.

■ Students can make a bulletin board of ideas organized around the letters of the alphabet as they progress through a unit or a lengthy text such as a content area chapter or a novel.

▶ Adaptations for ELLs

■ If you provide ELLs with real objects or pictures related to the text, they can use these objects and/or pictures to make a visual representation of the Alpha Boxes strategy. For example, if students are reading a text about plants, they can arrange leaves, seeds, and pictures of plant parts into the Alpha Boxes structure.

■ ELLs benefit from opportunities to discuss their ideas with a partner. Pair each ELL with a partner for the preparation of the Alpha Boxes sheet.

■ ELLs may be overwhelmed by the number of letters included in the Alpha Boxes strategy. To make the strategy more manageable for ELLs, you can reduce the number of letters on the Alpha Boxes sheet that each student is responsible for completing. For example, you may ask the ELL to choose five letters to focus on for the strategy.

▶ Assessment Idea

■ You can use the Alpha Boxes strategy as an informal assessment to determine the amount and depth of students' understanding about content they have been studying. For example, at the end of a unit of study, you can ask students to complete an Alpha Boxes sheet to show what they have learned. By reviewing these Alpha Boxes sheets, you can determine if students understand the key concepts fully or if additional teaching is needed to emphasize important content.

FIGURE 1.6A   *Alpha Boxes*

Name		Topic	
A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P
Q	R	S	T
U	V	W	XYZ

FIGURE 1.6B *Sample Completed Alpha Boxes*

Alpha Boxes			
Name *Jen Davis*		Topic *The Reading Process*	
A *After reading, one should reflect on ideas.*	**B** *Before reading one should set a purpose.*	**C** *Comprehension is the goal of reading.*	**D** *During reading one should monitor comprehension.*
E *Engagement is important so the reader is actively involved.*	**F** *Finish—When one finishes reading a text, one should reflect on ideas.*	**G** *Goals—The goals a reader brings to a text affect engagement.*	**H** *Higher level comprehension includes synthesis and evaluation.*
I *Inferences require the reader to "read between the lines."*	**J** *Journey – Becoming a skilled reader is a journey.*	**K** *Knowledge—The background knowledge a reader has can help comprehension.*	**L** *Learning is one purpose for reading.*
M *Monitoring improves comprehension.*	**N** *Narrative texts require a different reading process than expository texts.*	**O** *Organizers (semantic or graphic) aid comprehension.*	**P** *Purpose—One needs to set a purpose for reading.*
Q *Questions— Active readers ask and answer questions.*	**R** *Reflecting on reading is when one thinks back on what was read.*	**S** *Strategies can help readers to understand texts.*	**T** *Texts vary in difficulty.*
U *Understanding or comprehension is the goal of reading.*	**V** *Visualizing can promote comprehension.*	**W** *Writing can be used to promote comprehension.*	**XYZ** *Zone of proximal development ZPD*

FIGURE 1.6C   *Sample Alpha Box Sheet for Class Display*

R   Reflecting

Reflecting on reading is when one thinks back on what was read.