

Strategies to Motivate Struggling Readers

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Beat the Teacher

What is it? Beat the Teacher is an activity that helps students develop strong questioning skills that result in enhanced comprehension.

How to do it: To play Beat the Teacher follow these steps:

1. Ask students to read a text selection carefully. When they finish, have them form pairs or small groups and write a list of questions that you, the teacher, will find difficult to answer.
2. While students are reading and developing questions, read the selection yourself and create a list of questions for students.
3. After you and the students are done creating questions, sit in front of the class and prepare to be peppered with questions.
4. Select a student to record both questions and answers so copies can be given to everyone after the activity.
5. To play the game, give each group a sequential number. Then:
 - a. Call on the first group and have them ask you a question.
 - b. If the group stumps you, the class earns a point.
 - c. Call on the next group and have them ask you a question. You may not ask a question until you can correctly answer one of the students' questions.
 - c. If you answer correctly, give yourself a point and ask the next group a question. If the group you call on cannot correctly answer the question, you get a point. Students may not ask you a question until they can correctly answer one of your questions. (You may decide whether or not to continue to ask the same question after stumping a group of students for the first time.)

Cartoon Capers

What is it? Cartoon Capers is an activity in which students create cartoons to represent reading selections. This activity not only taps students' visual-spatial learning modality, it allows you to quickly check student comprehension.

How to do it: To have your students create Cartoon Capers, follow these steps:

1. Choose a passage you want your students to read.
2. Give each student at least six index cards.
3. Challenge students to read a brief selection of text (only one or two paragraphs) and on an index card draw a quick cartoon summarizing the information they read.
4. Ask students to complete this process at least six times for subsequent selections of the text.
5. Once a student has completed six index cards, pick up his or her cards and shuffle them. Now challenge the student to arrange the cartoons in the order of the reading.

Pattern Puzzles

What is it? Pattern Puzzles is a reading strategy that challenges students to read a text selection and then organize what they've read. Students are challenged to put a series of cards containing key ideas from the text in order. This is a thinking activity that combines physical manipulation of pieces with mental manipulation of concepts. Students can work individually, in pairs, in small groups, or even as a whole class.

How to do it: Follow these steps to create Pattern Puzzles:

1. Choose a section of text you want your students to read.
2. Think of 8-10 key ideas from the text and write each one on an index card. You can use direct quotes from the text or write the ideas in your own words. Shuffle the cards and place them in an envelope.
3. Distribute the envelopes to students. Challenge them to place the cards in the proper sequence. As they read, they can go back and change the order of their sentence strips.
4. You can also ask students to create a timeline or a Venn diagram.

Picture This!

What is it? Picture This! is a powerful method for motivating students to use their visual literacy skills to read and remember text. Students see a projected image, discuss it, read a text selection that “explains” the image, and then connect their reading to a deeper discussion and understanding of the projected image.

How to do it: Follow these Picture This! steps to increase your students’ reading comprehension:

1. Select a text selection for which you can easily find an image to illustrate.
2. Project the image and ask students a series of carefully spiraled questions such as:
 - What do you see?
 - Who are the people in this image?
 - What are they doing?
 - Why are they doing it?
 - What does that tell you about this key moment in history?
3. Now challenge students to read the text selection in pairs and find as many sentences as possible that can be found in the image. Tell them that they will come to the front of the classroom, read the sentence, and point to the exact spot in the image that connects to the reading. Example: If the image shows Islamic-influenced architecture in Africa, students would pick out the sentence: “Al-Saheli built rectangular houses out of brick and with flat roofs.” Students would point to the flat roofs and bricks in the image.
4. Select several pairs to come forward (with their text in hand) and line up to the side of the screen. Have them read a sentence and then point out where they “see” that sentence in the image. Continue until the class runs out of sentences to connect to the image.

Hint: Keep a tally of the number of sentences students find in the image and tell them to try to “beat” the score of one of your other classes.

RAP-Q

What is it? RAP-Q is a clever and easy to remember strategy that helps students actively read, comprehend, and remember text selections.

How to do it: Post these four RAP-Q steps in your classroom and have students practice them weekly when they read text selections:

Read a paragraph or a section of text. Do not read long sections; short sections will be easier for you to understand.

Ask yourself what the main ideas are. Try to find the sentence or sentences that give the most important ideas in the section that you read.

Put the main ideas into your own words. This is called *paraphrasing*.

Questions: Based on your paraphrasing of the main ideas, write a question and an answer on the back of a notecard. Compare the notecards that you wrote about the main ideas of previous paragraphs or sections so that you can see how the idea of one section is related to the next.

Reciprocal Teaching
Palincsar et al, 1984, 1986

What is it? Reciprocal Teaching combines four comprehension strategies: summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting.

How to do it: Follow these steps to use this powerful strategy:

1. Create a four-column chart with each column headed by a different comprehension role:

Summarizer	Questioner	Clarifier	Predictor
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2. Put students in groups of four.
3. Distribute a notecard with one of the four roles to each group member.
4. Have students read a few paragraphs of the assigned text selection. Encourage them to use note taking strategies to help them better prepare for their roles in the discussion.
5. At the given stopping point, the **Summarizer** will verbally highlight the key ideas up to this point in the reading.
6. The **Questioner** will then pose questions about the selection:
 - unclear portions
 - puzzling information
 - connections to other concepts already learned, etc.
7. The **Clarifier** will address confusing parts and attempt to answer the questions that were just posed.
8. The **Predictor** then offers guesses about what the next events in the text will be.
9. The roles in the group then rotate to the right, and students read the next text selection and repeat the process in their new roles. The process continues until the entire selection is read.

Think Aloud

What is it? Think Aloud is a strategy for modeling reflective, active reading and then having students practice the skill.

How to do it: Follow these simple steps for the Think Aloud strategy:

1. Copy the text selection you want to model on an overhead transparency.
2. Read the passage out loud to your students. As you read, stop periodically and share the connections you are making with the text. These connections might include
 - a personal connection.
 - some background knowledge you have.
 - a connection with some other content.
 - an image or idea you have that helps explain the content.
 - a personal reaction.
 - a funny idea or joke that comes to mind.
3. As you share this information, highlight the text, and write or draw in the margin your Think Alouds.
4. Give students a selection of text to read. Have them (on a separate sheet of paper) create a list of their own Think Alouds.
5. Encourage students to share some of their Think Alouds.

Three-Minute Pauses

Jay McTighe

What is it? Three-Minute Pauses is a strategy that provides opportunities for students to stop, reflect on new concepts and ideas, make connections to prior knowledge or experience, and seek clarification.

How to do it: Follow these steps for the Three-Minute Pauses strategy:

- 1. Give students a selection of text and have them read it for five minutes.** Stop them at the end of the time regardless of how far they have progressed through the text.
- 2. Summarize Key Ideas Thus Far** Put students into groups of three to five. Give them a total of *three minutes* to verbally summarize what they read. Make sure they focus only on the main ideas.
- 3. Add Your Own Thoughts** Next, ask students to use their prior knowledge to spend *three minutes* making connections with the new material: What connections can be made? What does this remind you of? What would round out your understanding of this? What can you add?
- 4. Pose Clarifying Questions** Finally, ask students to make a list of clarifying questions in *three minutes* such as: Are there things that are still not clear? Are there confusing parts? Are you having trouble making connections? Can you anticipate where we're headed? Can you probe for deeper insights?
- 5. Debrief** each reading selection with the entire class.

WRAP

What is it? WRAP is a simple strategy to reinforce fluency. Students will both listen to the text being read and read the text for themselves. WRAP stands for Whisper Read Alternating Paragraphs.

How to do it: These are the simple steps to conduct a WRAP.

1. Place students with a partner. Give them a text selection to read.
2. Direct one student to whisper read the first paragraph while the second student reads along. Partners alternate reading every other paragraph.
3. At the end of every page, have the two students discuss five facts they learned from the text.

Hint: Before you begin this activity, have a student practice whispering reading in front of the entire class so the rest of the class can hear how softly they will need to read the text.

Three Point Review

What is it? This is a reading review game played by three students using a pre-prepared checklist of significant points from the text.

How to do it: To play “Three Point Review” follow these steps:

1. Put students into groups of three and have them number themselves “1, 2, and 3.”
2. Distribute checklists to Students 2 and 3.
3. Direct Student 1 to tell Students 2 and 3 everything they remember about the reading.
4. Direct Students 2 and 3 to mark an “X” on the checklist terms that Student 1 shares.
5. When Student 1 can no longer recall information, Students 2 and 3 ask questions based on the ideas not checked off their lists. As student 1 answers these correctly, Students 2 and 3 will mark an X on the checklist next to that term.
6. The review for Student 1 is finished when all words on the checklist are marked or when student 1 can no longer answer questions. Student 2 and 3 should give Student 1 the checklists. Now Student 1 knows what information he/she is lacking and what information he/she needs to review.
7. Rotate student numbers and repeat the quizzing with clean copies of the same checklist. Alternatively, you might wish to move on to a different section of reading.
8. Repeat steps 2-5.