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Self-Questioning to Support Reading Comprehension

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Self-Questioning to Support Reading Comprehension

By: Judy Zorfass, Liz Weinbloom, and PowerUp WHAT WORKS (2014)

INTRODUCTION

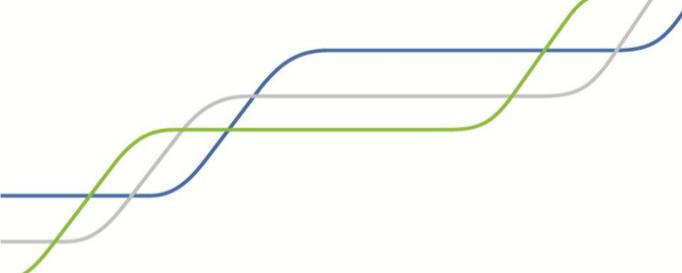
Proficient readers typically engage with a text by asking themselves questions as they read: Who is speaking? Why did the author choose this example? What's important here? Do I understand what I am reading?

In contrast, struggling readers, and those with disabilities, are not likely to pose questions before, during, or after reading. These students, in particular, need direct instruction and practice in self-questioning. As students develop this skill, they will become better at reading comprehension and will build the skills they need to be college and career ready. The specific ELA Common Core State Standards related to self-questioning are:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1](#) Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2](#) Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10](#) Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Making sure that students understand the three basic types of question—literal, inferential, and evaluative—is a good starting point. The answers to literal questions are “right there” in the text (e.g., details, key words, main idea, core concept). To answer inferential questions, readers must think deeply and use context clues to look beyond what is stated outright in the text. To answer evaluative questions, readers need to consider different perspectives, make a

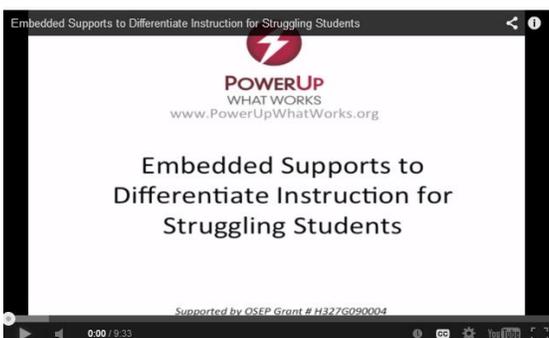


judgment, and/or take a position. Model for your students varied ways to pose anticipatory questions before reading, self-monitoring questions during reading, and assessing for understanding questions after reading. Use hypertexts and mixed media to create a document with appropriate self-questions embedded via hypertext or word processor comments.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTS

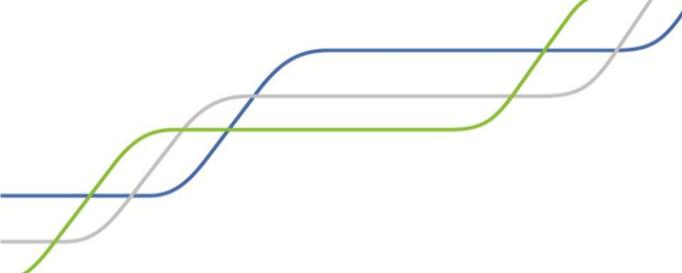
Your clear explanations can highlight critical features of the self-questioning approach, especially when you involve a range of technology tools. Integrate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles by giving students a wide range of options for how they produce these questions, including writing in the margins, typing comments in a word processor document, adding notes to a collaborative document, making an audio recording, creating a semantic map, or discussing the text with a partner. A four-column chart with general questions in the headings (such as “What do I know about this topic?” and “What more do I want to know?”) can be helpful for recording questions before, during, and after reading.

By modeling and integrating technology, you can help your students understand self-questioning. Use hypertexts and mixed media to create a document with appropriate self-questions embedded via hypertext or word processor comments, and programs that can link audio questions to a written document. Check out the [“Embedded Supports to Differentiate Instruction for Struggling Students”](#) video for more ideas.



You can provide opportunities for students to practice self-questioning by asking them to generate their own questions, share their questions with peers, and respond to their peers' questions as well as their own. Have students co-read a text (e.g., in a Google Doc) and ask questions of each other in real time.

Vary the environments in which students use this strategy by integrating self-questioning into reading, writing and discussion. You can even take advantage of smart phones by having students send each other text messages with questions.



IN THE CLASSROOM

Ms. Raya's lesson plan for her fourth grade class provides a good example of how self-questioning can be practiced to improve reading comprehension in all content areas. Ms. Raya's students recently learned about literal, inferential, and evaluative questions. They have been maintaining a collaborative document where they collect, categorize, and share these types of question based on diverse readings. In this lesson, Ms. Raya plans to assist both her struggling and proficient students to better understand historical fiction by modeling and supporting self-questioning behavior (which aligns with the Common Core State Standard on close reading and citing textual evidence to support analysis listed above).

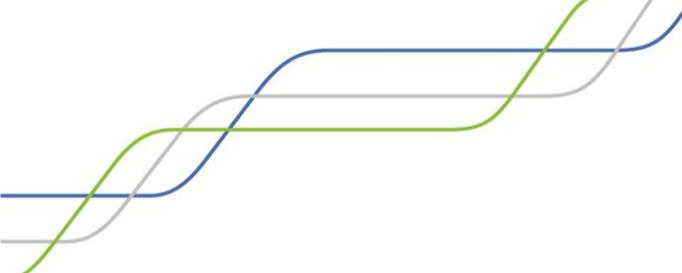
Ms. Raya will have her students practice using self-questioning methods to comprehend and explain a text. They will use varied question types to make literal, inferential, and evaluative statements about a text, and they will tie the questions and answers directly to specific details and locations in the text. She will support her learners with technology tools, including an interactive white board, tablets for individual student work, collaborative documents for class-wide collecting and sharing of information, and digitally distributed graphic organizers and templates.

She plans her lesson by dividing it into three sections: before reading, during reading, and after reading.

Lesson Plan

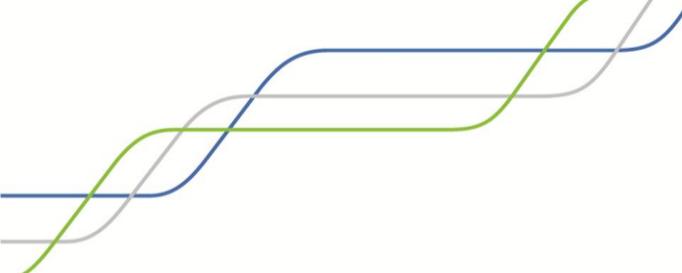
Before Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage students' prior knowledge of the three types of self-question.• Elicit sample student self-questions from the homework assignment.• Review the chart that outlines question types with reference to exemplar student questions.
During Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• During the reading period, have students read the first chapter of "Pioneer Girl" and develop questions in order to





	<p>support their understanding of the chapter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have students follow along with an oral reading of the first two pages of the chapter. Explain: “As I read aloud, imagine that I am the author reading my story to you. What would you ask me?”• Stop reading at natural breaks so that students can jot down questions on a piece of paper or on their tablet.
After Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On the whiteboard, have student volunteers highlight the text and insert their self-questions as comments.• Display a blank three-column chart for the three question types on the whiteboard. Insert student questions in the appropriate column.• Have students generate more questions of all three types.• Ask students to consider a deeper evaluative question: “How was pioneer life different from my life?”• Fill in a chart for comparison (my life versus pioneer life).• For those students who need more help, provide list of self-questioning exercises.• Review two questions—one that is evaluative and one that is literal or inferential.• Identify the evaluative question and be ready to discuss why the question is evaluative and how they would answer the question.• Have students read the next chapter carefully on their own or with a partner.• Have students work in pairs to generate three questions—an evaluative question, a literal question, and an inferential question.• Have students label each question type and explain why they used that label.• Have students answer the questions as a way to check their comprehension. Have student pairs exchange their questions with other pairs.





ONLINE TEACHER RESOURCES ON VISUALIZING

This article draws from the [PowerUp WHAT WORKS](#) website, particularly the [Self-Questioning Instructional Strategy Guide](#). PowerUp is a free, teacher-friendly website that requires no log-in or registration. The Instructional Strategy Guide on self-questioning includes a brief overview that defines self-questioning along with an accompanying slide show; a list of the relevant ELA Common Core State Standards; evidence-based teaching strategies to differentiate instruction using technology; another case story; short videos; and links to resources that will help you use technology to support instruction in self-questioning. If you are responsible for professional development, the [PD Support Materials](#) provide helpful ideas and materials for using the self-questioning resources. Want more information? See [PowerUp WHAT WORKS](#).

