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Sincerely,
Karen Haag

Sample Lesson: 5-Day Questioning-Strategy Lesson

Day One: Teacher Models How to Question a Book Using Sticky Notes to Record Thoughts

Gather the children around you on the floor. Ask them to bring their thinkers' notebooks and their pencils. Re-create the warmth of feeling when reading a book at night with mom or dad. Some children sit on chairs and some on the floor but everyone should be able to see what the teacher is doing.

ENGAGE

Explain that you've learned a new technique that helps you comprehend better. Tell students about your excitement to share something that works so well.

EXPLAIN Learning Target and Directions:

Readers ask questions before, during and after reading.

1. Tell the children that they are to watch you "read and think aloud". They should observe what you do and say. Tell them, you will be thinking aloud what your questions are and you don't want them to answer! You want them to hear your answers at first.
2. Say something like, "Today I am going to model using a new strategy. I have a new book I've never read before, some sticky notes, and my pencil. I want you to watch how I use the strategy called questioning. Pay very close attention to what I do and say. The reason I am modeling for you is so that you know what to do before I ask you to give it a try."

MODEL

1. Model *overviewing* - reading the cover, looking at the picture and noticing the author/illustrator.
2. Stick questions on the front of the book that you have before you even start reading. The "experts" suggest one question per sticky note.
3. Read the first few pages, stopping wherever you have a question. When you read hold the book. When you think, put the book in your lap. Draw a strong line in some way between when you're reading and when you're questioning.
4. Talk out loud about what you're wondering. Flip the pages back and forth to model rereading or other strategies you use to make sense of the text.
5. Students turn and talk with a partner to explain what they've observed the teacher doing. Take time to make sure they understand.
6. Once you've read a couple pages and the students are ready to try also, ask them to pick up their clipboards with the 6 sticky notes.
7. Continue to read aloud and write your own questions. Invite the students to write theirs. Finish reading the book in this way. For younger readers, you may want to read this first book all the way through.

NOTES: Sometimes you will notice that the students are bursting to share their questions. Or, you feel that some students need scaffolding. In either case, I stop midway through the book and ask students to share their questions with a partner. It gives the auditory kids a chance to talk. It helps readers feel more comfortable to see that they are following directions. You are more likely to catch students who don't understand the assignment if they check in with a partner.

Materials for Day One

1. Find a meaty book – ripe for discussion. You might select a book that integrates with your social studies or science curriculum, or your genre, series or author study. Read through it ahead of time to be sure it's a good modeling book. My favorite modeling book is *The Three Questions* based on a story by Leo Tolstoy. The author is Jon J Muth.
2. Children need a surface on which to write – clipboard, daybook, or large book.
3. Six sticky notes per child.
4. Extra sticky notes.

Sample questions you might ask for *The Three Questions* while the students observe and analyze. I'm not suggesting you write all these questions this first time. I wanted to show all the questions you can ask that meet state and national standards. Questioning a book is an enjoyable way to teach your curriculum!

Types of Questions You Can Teach Yourself to Ask!	Read or Notice	Think & Write – one question per sticky note
Set Purpose Before Reading Question	Read, <i>The Three Questions</i> .	What are the three questions for which the book is named?
Accessing Background Knowledge Question	Read, The story is based on a true story by Leo Tolstoy.	I know he was a GREAT writer. I bet this will be a GREAT story. I know Leo Tolstoy wrote in Russia. Will this story take place in Russia?
Author's Craft Question	Read, The story is dedicated to Nikolai.	I wonder if he will be the main character in the story? And if he is, is he related to Leo Tolstoy, the original writer or to Jon Muhr, the author of this book?
Illustration Question	Notice, The boy is flying a red kite on the first page.	Why red? Why is he flying a kite?
Setting Question	Notice, The boy is at the water's edge and there are mountains in this picture. There are 3 animals - a monkey, a dog, and a bird.	Where does the story take place? Is it Russia? Do monkeys live in Russia?
Refer-Back Question	Read, The story begins, "There once was a boy name Nikolai..."	Is the boy the same as the boy the book is dedicated to? Was I right?
Plot Question	Notice, I found the 3 questions on this page!	What are the answers?
Vocabulary Question	Read, heron...	What's a heron?
Genre Question	Notice, There are animals in this book and they talk.	Is this a fable? What's the lesson?
Characterization Question	Notice, Each of the animals has a distinct personality	Is each animal a symbol?
	Notice, The kite is on every page so far.	Is the kite a symbol or a character?
Prediction Question	The boy is going to meet someone named Leo.	Who is Leo? Will he know the answers to the three questions?
Big Idea Question		If this is a fable, then what clues will tell me what lesson the boy will learn?
Author's Purpose Question	All clues	Is the author trying to convince us that we should appreciate what we have?

EVALUATE

1. After finishing the book, give students time to share their questions with a partner.
2. Ask a couple students to share questions that did get answered with the class.
3. Ask a couple students to share questions that didn't get answered with the class. Talk about initial reactions to questions that didn't get answered.
4. Share your reaction to the strategy. Personally, I found that this strategy slowed down my reading. It made me much more reflective. I realized I loved sharing with a partner to see where our questions connected and where they were different. I was interested to see which questions got answered and which questions didn't. I think I would use this strategy when I am reading challenging books.

5. Reassure students that while you are asking them to write questions on their sticky notes today, eventually you want them to think the questions in their heads. They won't be recording their questions – except for the ones that don't get answered. Those questions are perfect questions to bring to discussion groups.

REVIEW LEARNING TARGETS. STUDENTS EXPLAIN:

EXIT SLIP→ Ask students to explain what effect self-questioning had on their reading today.

Collect the 6 notes from each child to record later on a chart for tomorrow's lesson. Announce that you will make the book available for students to read.

Day Two: Rereading *The Three Questions*

ENGAGE

Ask students if they remembered the questions they asked about *The Three Questions* from yesterday.

Show them the chart where you sorted their questions and ask them what they notice. With younger children, read the questions to them and ask what they notice. (Hopefully, they will notice you put similar questions together.)

EXPLAIN TODAY'S LEARNING TARGET

Readers reread books to see what new ideas they learn.

Readers reread books to discover themes and main ideas.

THINK ALOUD

As you reread *The Three Questions*, think aloud : (1) answers to the question that didn't get answered yesterday, (2) new questions, (3) new observations or conclusions you have. Invite the children to think along with you, and (4) clues you're considering that might lead you to the theme of this book.

THINK ALONG

When you're ready to release some of the responsibility for rereading and thinking to the students, tell them to join in with their thoughts about the same 4 categories.

At the end of the reading, re-think the theme of this book. What do the children think now that they have re-read the book?

The main idea is a short summary of who + did what. It is a reading question. Students should not disagree on the main idea. The theme is a literary analysis term. What message is conveyed by the author to each reader? What each child believes in personal but should be supported by evidence. Readers love to debate themes. As children get older, the teacher can ask what unifying idea underpins the story, but for now stick with discussing the author's message.

EVALUATE

Discuss what the children learned by re-reading the book. They will probably be surprised at how much more they noticed and how many more questions they were able to answer. They notice more evidence to answer questions and to determine themes because they pay attention to details they didn't hear the first time.

Lead your students to an understanding that...

- Re-reading is a strategy good readers use when they read texts.
- Questions that students struggle with during the first reading might get answered after re-reading.
- Students who question as they read understand texts better.
- Paying attention to the questions readers raise is a skill that needs to be practiced. Often readers don't give themselves enough time to stop and think in this way.

REVIEW LEARNING TARGETS. STUDENTS EXPLAIN:

EXIT SLIP→ (1) What did you learn by rereading? (2) How will you use rereading in the future?

Materials for Day Two

1. Write the questions from the sticky notes onto chart paper *before* reading time.
2. Sort the questions as you write them. Put similar questions together.
3. A copy of *The Three Questions* for re-reading.
4. Each student needs a partner or two.

Day Three: Students Try Self-Questioning Independently

ENGAGE

See who can remember all the steps readers used to read a book the first day of this unit.

1. Ask & write questions before, during and after reading.
2. Write questions for each page.
3. Get a new sticky note for a new page.

REVIEW LEARNING TARGETS

1. Readers ask questions before, during and after reading.
2. Readers reread books to see what new ideas they learn.
3. Readers reread books to discover themes and main ideas.

EXPLAIN NEW LEARNING TARGETS

4. Note evidence that answers questions by writing the page number of the text on the sticky note.
5. Prepare to bring questions that didn't get answered to discussion group.

EXPLORE

- Give children time to read and record questions independently.
- Depending on your students, they should be able to read 30-40 minutes.
- During this time, the teacher confers with individuals, teaching as needed or taking anecdotal notes to determine future lessons.
- Make sure the students save their sticky notes by leaving them in place in the book for tomorrow.
- Children who finish early can work in centers or do independent reading. Some task will need to be available because children will finish at different times.
- Students who read 1-2 years below grade level may need to listen to a book on tape.

EVALUATE

1. Gather students on the rug.
2. Ask students to talk about their experiences with Read, Think & Write.
3. Look at sticky notes under the DocCam where students remembered to record page number of evidence for the answers they discovered.
4. Discuss what worked and what needs work with this skill.
5. Listen to personal stories. Take notes on what readers tell you.
6. Let children brainstorm solutions to problems. For example, some students may tell you that it was painful writing questions. They just wanted to read! Valid complaint, I'd say. A possible solution: Students read for 15-20 minutes and mark their questions IN THE BOOK with a very light pencil point. Then, when the teacher tells them there's 10 minutes left, students write the questions that didn't get answered on sticky notes or in thinkers' notebooks. Valuing complaints and brainstorming solutions will help your readers embrace new strategies.

REVISIT LEARNING TARGETS. STUDENTS EXPLAIN:

4. Note evidence that answers questions by writing the page number of the text on the sticky note.
5. Prepare to bring questions that didn't get answered to discussion group.

EXIT SLIP → Look at the learning targets for today. What worked for you? What made you struggle? (Gave you *disequilibrium*)

Materials for Day Three

1. Divide your class into 3 or 4 instructional reading groups.
2. Select a book for each group that can be read in one sitting. Each child needs his/her own copy.
3. Provide sticky notes for each child - 6 per student.
4. Independent assignment or center for students who finish before others.
5. Differentiation: For children who are 2 years or below grade level - record one of the selected books on tape.
6. DocCam (optional)

Day Four: Readers Discuss Questions In Groups

ENGAGE

Tell students that groups get together all over the country to discuss books. They like to ask their own questions and get their peers' responses. Also, good readers love to figure out the author's purpose and the theme of the book.

If possible, show a video of students discussing books so students will have a visual of what they will be doing.

Students will work in independent discussion circles about one time per week when you are meeting with small groups. Students need to know how those circles will work.

Materials for Day Four

1. Discussion Group Rules written on a chart. (My group rules are listed at the bottom of the Strategy Circle page on this site.)
2. Purpose for the day written on a sentence strip.
3. Books still available.
4. Sit groups together for discussion.

EXPLAIN LEARNING TARGET

6. Readers talk about books with friends.

MODEL

Select 4-5 students ahead of time and ask them if they will model how to discuss.

Bring the students into a circle of chairs in the middle of the class with their books and sticky notes. Tell students that groups that are turned toward one another and are looking at one another will be more successful – research tells us so.

Ask the group to model these steps that you have posted somewhere where students can see them.

1. Elect a leader.
2. The leader welcomes everyone to the group by name.
3. The leader reminds the group of their purpose for the day. For example, *We are together to discuss the questions we did not get answered when we were reading alone.*
4. Students take turns ask questions, discussing, pointing to evidence in the book, complimenting one another, and giving everyone an equal chance to participate.
5. When time is called, the group works together to write a generalization summarizing what happened in the group.* They should decide who will share the statement with the class. *Ex: We noticed that all our questions seemed to be about vocabulary today. Or, we spent most of our time talking about one question because we couldn't agree.*
6. The group leader compliments everyone in the group for something specific that they did well. For example, *Thank you for reminding us that we hadn't given Ramone a chance to talk. Or, you were very helpful in finding evidence in the book for us.*

Work through all 6 steps. Ask the group to discuss only 1-2 questions that they brought to the circle. Otherwise, the students watching will disengage. However, if you see problems, take the time you need to make sure your students understand how to operate these groups independently, even if you need a couple days.

Talk through potential problems and solutions with the whole class. Initially, your students may bring these challenges to your attention, for example. Add to this chart throughout the year.

Challenge	Our Solution
Hard to hear some people talk	When the person is speaking, raise hands so the speaker can see a visual of how many people can't hear.
Difficulty selecting a leader	Tell the teacher and the teacher will select this first time in order for the group to get started quickly.
Some people don't know how to take turns.	The leader must keep the group moving, remind people to listen to one another, make sure everyone is contributing - not equally! - but at least that everyone gets a chance

EXPLORE

NOTES: Depending on how long it took for the group to model, this part of the lesson may need to take place the next day.

1. Assign groups to spaces in the room and let them try their hand at discussion circles.
2. Allow time for students to complete the 6 steps.

REVISIT THE LEARNING TARGET. STUDENTS EXPLAIN:

Readers talk about books with friends.

EVALUATE

Ask one person from each group to share their generalization statements. Record them or ask for a copy.

* You can vary how groups report. Besides writing summary statements, you might assign:

- What is the most interesting point made in discussion?
- What they think the big idea and/or author's purpose of their book is.
- Share something someone did to make the discussion flow more smoothly and evenly.
- Tell how the group thinks this strategy can be applied to other reading assignments.
- What's one word that describes your group today?

EXIT SLIP → Ask readers to write the main idea of today's lesson on an index card.

Day Five Determining Author's Purpose

EXPLAIN learning targets:

I can determine the main idea or theme of a text.

I can determine the author's purpose for writing the text.

ENGAGE

Write this where students can see it: Writers write for many reasons.

Among them are . . .

1. To inform - articles about extinct animals
2. To persuade - editorial page
3. To explain - a book explaining how an airplane flies
4. To entertain – the first movie, Shrek

Materials for Day 5

1. Write notes for the Engage part of the lesson where everyone can see them.
2. Make a copy of Discussion Rules available.
3. Write the learning targets of a sentence strip.
4. Use the same reading groups and the text for each group.

Make sure the students understand each reason. An example from your reading will help.

Also, make sure they understand that sometimes the purpose is a combination of reasons.

The big idea is the main idea that the author hopes the reader will understand. For example,

- In an article about extinct animals - Gorillas are in danger of extinction.
- In an editorial - We need money to pay for sidewalks.
- In an informational book - A plane creates different air densities above and below the wing to lift off.
- In a movie - It doesn't matter what you look like on the outside. It's the inside that counts! (Shrek)

Pull 3-4 students together to model how to have a group conversation about main idea or theme and author's purpose. They should model while your other students watch and analyze the groups' effectiveness. The group might need to model ALL the steps as listed on the chart as a review.

EXPLORE

Independent groups follow the Group Discussion Rules. Ask students to discuss what they think the author's purpose is as applied to the text they just read. i.e.; (1) What is the theme/main idea of the reading? (2) Why did the author write this text? (3) What evidence supports your belief?

STUDENTS EXPLAIN

Stop the group about 5 minutes before closure time. Remind the leaders to compliment each person for their contribution today and be specific. Ask the groups to summarize what they want to share with the whole class.

EVALUATE

Just choose one option. Assess using a strategy that matches the focus of the group discussion.

- ✓ Ask students to write the main idea of today's lesson on an index card. Collect them to see who needs reteaching or extension activities.
- ✓ Ask readers to write: (1) what did you learn about self-questioning and (2) how do you plan to use what you learned?
- ✓ Ask learners to complete an assessment you made out in advance like...
 1. The big idea of a story is _____ .
 2. The big idea of my story was _____ .
 3. An author usually writes a story for one of four reasons. The reasons are 1. 2. 3. 4.
 4. I think the author wrote the story I read because _____ .
 5. Explain how you use self-questioning to understand a story better.
 6. Explain how you plan to use self-questioning.

→ **Or EXIT SHEET:** You might ask students to record their answers to 3 questions, depending on how much time you have. Here are some suggestions:

- What came out in discussion that you think is interesting for the whole class to hear?
- How did the strategy help your group discuss better?
- How do you think this strategy can be used with other texts that you are reading?