**Engaging Learning Strategies**

**Bell Ringers**

Bell Ringers are warm-up activities that students complete at the beginning of class- when the bell rings. They are the hook, pre-game or warm-up of your lesson. An activity at the start of the lesson activates pre-existing knowledge on a subject, and may even get students to use (or consider) some of the ideas, vocabulary, or even grammar important to the lesson. Students should be able to complete this activity without instruction or help from the teacher. The activity should only take 3-8 minutes to complete. The activity should preview or review a lesson. The students should keep a notebook or a journal with their daily warm-ups so the teacher can periodically check them for effort and participation. Daily Starters can be projected on your whiteboard or handed out as an entry ticket (see video below).

Video: <http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/entry-ticket>

**Guided Imagery Visualization**

Guided Imagery Visualization- Students close their eyes and listen for a description of a particular scene, event, scenario, person, etc. After they have heard the teacher read the description, students either write or share what they “saw” in their minds. Having students visualize a scene or person helps them reflect, connect, or engage to the upcoming lesson. This is a really good activating strategy or hook.

**Grateful Reflection Activity**

One way to change an external, anxious or unhappy mood is by actively feeling gratitude or peace. At the beginning of a class, ask students if they’d be willing to participate in an experiment that might help them have a better day (most will say yes). Then, tell them that the experiment involves learning how to shift their thoughts to things that make t hem feel good about life. Begin the activity by having students find a partner and take a five-minute walk. For the outbound part of the walk, they make a point to get to know each other better. During the return half of their journey, they share things in their life for which they are grateful. They could also visualize a peaceful place or something positive. Most people will be in a pretty good mood by the time they get back!

**Use Props to Tell a Story-**

Storytelling- There are so many diverse, wonderful, and sometimes overwhelming ways to do this. Our brains are hard-wired to think and express in terms of a beginning, middle and end. It's how we understand the world. Storytelling strongly attracts children to books. It has a power that reading stories does not because it frees the storyteller to use creative techniques. It also has the advantage of keeping the storyteller close to the audience. Telling a story produces an immediate response from the audience and is one of the surest ways to establish rapport between listeners and storyteller. Storytelling Inspires purposeful talking, raises the enthusiasm for reading texts to find stories, initiates writing because children will quickly want to write stories and tell them, enhances the community in the room, and improves listening skills. The teacher can also use props and even have students act out particular parts of the story. It doesn’t matter the age of your students because everyone loves to hear a good story! This strategy is a great hook or activating strategy to build interest or background knowledge at the beginning of a lesson or unit.

**Hold-Ups**

Hold-Ups are interaction-based activities that use response cards. In these activities, students interactively reflect on a prompt and hold up a card, paper, or whiteboard in response. Studies show that that response cards are useful for improving participation and on-task behavior. Students learn a great deal from each other through the interaction. When students hold up different cards, use it as a thinking opportunity for the groups.

1. Ask the students to think about and discuss their responses to a set of prepared questions.
2. Before students hold up their cards, have them pair-share or confer in small groups. They should not hold up their cards until told to do so.
3. Students hold up their cards. Select students to share their group’s rationale for their choice.

**True/False Hold-Ups**

* The True/Not True Hold-Up can be used with content areas. Students should decide whether a statement is True, Not True, True with Modifications, or Unable to Determine based on information learned.
* The more students use these types of cards, the more careful they become about analyzing statements beyond simple explanations.
* For example, while using the following prompt: “The American Revolution was caused by the British taxation of the Colonists.” Is there a way to modify the statement to make it more true?
* Chart paper with the four quadrants, labeled *True, Not True, True with Modifications, and Unable to Determine ,* can be used to display sticky notes with student votes.

**Group Quiz Activity**

The teacher provides students with a website, video, or text about a particular subject. Students are to watch the video or read the text and then create a 5-question quiz based on the content provided. 10 minutes are provided to read the article and to devise questions for the quiz. At the end of the 10 minutes, half of the groups are asked to travel to the other groups’ tables and quiz them. When finished, “turn the tables” so that those who were quizzed become to quizzers.

**Numbered Heads Together**

Before asking the group to begin their activity, ask them to count off, so that each member is assigned a number (like 1 – 4). – Confirm student numbers by asking all 1s to stand, then all 2s, and so on to prevent numbers not being assigned or being assigned twice within a group. Also this will help avoid possibility of swapping numbers. – Inform students that all group members will need to be able to present their group’s information. Wait until after all group work is completed before informing students of the student number that will be presenting. – During the debriefing portion of the activity, call out the number for the team member who will be presenting for the group. Because they don’t know in advance which person in their group will be presenting the information, all group members are equally responsible for knowing the information discussed, as well as making sure that their peers know it equally well.

**Send to a Spot**

Set up in advance some interesting spots in the room. For example, you might display a magazine article or book, a learning station, hands-on manipulative, a powerful picture, or demonstration. Your audience will be curious about the spots you have chosen and what will happen there. Send everyone to different stations by picking a method to sort groups.

**Learning Stations**

Learning centers are designated activities that provide an engaging way for students to work independently of the teacher in small groups, pairs, or individually to reinforce and extend classroom learning. Model, Model, Model all activities AND have direction cards at all stations.

TYPES OF STATIONS- • Rotating (rotate students through activities, or rotate activities through groups of students) • Individualized Stations (students/groups only use the stations they need or to which they are assigned) • Sequential Learning Stations (students must work through the activities in a particular order and proceed with mastery) • Thematic Stations (all activities set up to support a specific unit of study) • Enrichment Stations (stations that can be selected after assigned stations are completed)

**Three 3’s in a Row**

Three 3’s in a Row • How it works: – Prepare nine questions based on the content being learned and type them in a Three 3’s in a Row template. – Students walk around the room asking peers to explain one answer (only one answer) to them. – Students summarize their peers’ responses in their box – Don’t let students write in each other’s template or you’ll end up with a passive game of pass-the-paper. Only the owner of the template writes on his template. – Students then find another peer to answer another question and repeat the process. Students can use any particular peer only once. – Go over the answers as a class, by asking volunteers to share their responses.

**Quick Writes**

How it works: Select a prompt that you would like students to address. – Give students a specified amount of time to collect their thoughts and jot down a response (3-5 minutes). – Follow this up with a Pair-Share, Networking Session, or Chalkboard Splash.

**Quick Draws**

How it works: – Select a “big idea” or major concept within your lesson. – Ask students to reflect on the meaning of the concept and create a visual image that represents that concept (allow 3-5 minutes). – Have students share/explain their image with a partner, small group or in a Chalkboard Splash.

**Snowball Activity**

Students divide a sheet of paper into 4 quadrants. Have them write something they learned in the first quadrant, then crumple up the paper and throw it to someone else. The person who catches it writes a comment in the first quadrant about what the first person said (like an extension of the information or correction) and then writes something new in the 2nd quadrant. Next, he or she crumples it up and throws it to a third person, who comments on information in the first and second quadrants and adds more to the third. Repeat this one more time so a fourth person can fill in the last quadrant. Time the paper tossing so it’s like a snow ball fight. All ages of students love this activity!

**Thumb Up/Down Vote**

How it works: – Ask a question for which a yes/no or agree/disagree response is appropriate. – Ask students to put their thumb pointing up if the answer is yes, or if they agree. Ask students to put their thumb pointing down if the answer is no, or if they disagree. You can also give in-between options (for example, thumb sideways if they’re not sure). – Don’t forget to follow through. If you ask students to vote, don’t move on until they have all done so. The key is that students be able to justify why they selected that response, even if it was a neutral response.

**Exit Slips**

The Exit Slip strategy is used to help students process new concepts, reflect on information learned, and express their thoughts about new information.  This strategy requires students to respond to a prompt given by the teacher, and is an easy way to incorporate writing into many different content areas.  Furthermore, the Exit Slip strategy is an informal assessment that will allow educators to adapt and differentiate their planning and instruction. The Exit Slip strategy allows educators to adapt to students' interests and inquiries on a given subject. This strategy can also be used to publish student comments, ideas, and opinions.  According to Wagner, “they [published exit slips] provide students with a recap of the previous day’s lesson, they give students confidence that their voice matters, and the students delight in looking for their entries.”

Exit Slips allow the teacher to collect students’ responses and plan accordingly for the next class session, differentiating for the abilities and understanding of different students.  This strategy is extremely useful in the classroom because it takes just a few moments to do, and gives teachers an informal measure of the students’ understanding of a new lesson or concept.

Determine a key concept that you want students to think about or for which you wish to gather information. A few minutes before the end of a lesson or class session, distribute the [Exit Slips](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/Exit%20Slips.pdf) and ask students to respond to a prompt that you pose to the class, related to the day’s lesson or information learned.

If you chose to present the prompt orally or post it, provide students with a small piece of paper or index card on which to write their responses, or ask students to record their responses in a notebook or piece of paper of their own.

Before students leave the room, collect their Exit Slips. Prior to the next session, review all of the students’ [Exit Slips](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/Exit%20Slips.pdf) to determine how the next class session may need to be structured differently to meet the needs of all learners in your classroom.